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NEW COMPUTER EXPRESS

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40 TOP WORD PROCESSORS

32 PAGES PACKED WITH BRITAIN'S BEST COMPUTER BARGAINS

SHOPPING EXPRESS

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● Twin disk drives ● Colour monitor ● PC compatible

PC BARGAIN: £299 inc VAT

Well established mail order company Evesham Micros is offering computer buyers the chance to pick up the cheapest ever IBM compatible PC.

The firm has bought hundreds of Olivetti PC1 machines which it plans to sell for only £299 – including VAT. Bargain hunters are to be offered a double drive PC with monitor, one year on-site maintenance, delivery and the VAT thrown in for £300. That's more than £150 cheaper than than the High Street price.

The Olivetti PC1 is a stripped down version of the Italian firm's range of high end PCs and was launched 18 months ago as a rival to Amstrad's PC1512. Dixons, traditionally an Amstrad stronghold, has stocked the machine since the pitching it as the ideal entry level PC.

However, it has finally decided to drop the machine and Evesham stepped in to buy the last stocks at rock bottom prices.

In the past, mail order companies have managed to sell PCs at extraordinarily low prices by scooping up old stock from manufacturers or distributors. Evesham itself used to sell the Atari PC1 for only £299. However, that was only a single 5.25-inch drive machine.

• Olivetti PC1: Low cost deal for first time buyers

"This is a chance for people to buy a complete PC for £300. They get the monitor and 3.5 inch drives. It's a terrific way to get started in computing," said Evesham director Richard Austin. "We've got about 800 of the machines but we don't expect them to be here for long."

The 8088 based machine runs at 8MHz and has 512K of RAM (expandable to 640K) and comes with MS-DOS version 3.2. It has a small footprint with the monitor placed on a swivel. It comes with the usual array of interfaces. However, one criticism levelled at the machine is its lack of expandability. "I would accept that is a problem but most people buying at this level don't need to expand," said Austin. "For first time buyers it's a remarkable deal."

Low cost computing leader Amstrad sells its cheapest PC – the Sinclair PC200 with monitor for £458 including VAT. Mail order price for a basic Atari ST without monitor is about £300 while a Commodore Amiga costs £350.

Evesham Micros is on 0386 765500.■

Original sim

Software houses are grooming their big name coin op licences for the end of year rush – but there are a still few brilliant original titles to watch out for.

One such is Firebird's *Stunt Car Racer* written by Geoff Crammond. It's a fully filled 3D first person racing game with some of the fastest graphics seen on a home computer. The Amiga version offers extraordinary realism in perspective with precise control over the vehicle.

Crammond – responsible for highly acclaimed games such as *Revs* and *The Sentinel* – has spent two years putting the project together. "I've been programming it with speed in mind. It really takes advantage of the ST and Amiga's processing power," he said. "There are a lot of film licenses and movie tie-ins around at this time of the year. But I hope some more original games have a look in as well."

• Stunt Car Racer: licence basher

Stunt Car Racer costs £24.95 on 16-bit machines; it's also available on the C64.

Other originals to look out for are *Sim City* from Infogrames (reviewed on page 67) and a strategic affair called *Laser Squad* from Blade.■

IBM joins virus war

IBM has joined in the fight against computer viruses by setting up a special research centre.

The firm is said to be taking the project seriously – details are being kept absolutely secret. But its aim is to try out different methods at killing off new viruses without damaging legitimate data.

The anti virus unit is based in the Thomas J Watson Research centre in New York. The small core of scientists are being given permission to use some of IBM's best men from all areas of the massive company.■

SUPERCHARGED AMIGA FOR JUST £1,500 EXCLUSIVE

by Jason Holborn and Colin Campbell

Commodore's super workstation Amiga will arrive in the UK early next year at a price of just over £1,500, *Express* can reveal.

The powerful machine will be based around a 68030 processor and will have 2Mb of RAM expandable to 8Mb. The memory will include 1Mb of chip RAM and 1Mb of fast RAM.

It will use asynchronous clock design. This allows you to plug in a faster clock oscillator and RAM which will instantly speed the machine up. This is the most important part of the new machine – the other extras can already be added to an Amiga 2000 which costs around £1,200.

The standard machine is believed to run at 25MHz although American sources suggest it will be shipped at 16MHz to keep costs down.

The bus is completely Amiga 2000 compatible and runs at the same speed. this will ensure compatibility with A2000 cards.

The machine will have the new enhanced chip set which gives super hi-res flicker free display and faster graphics operation.

It won't use the Amiga 1.4 operating system but will be shipped with current Release 1.3. Bridging software will be included to allow you to use the new enhanced chip set.

An on board SCSI hard drive controller will be included as well as fast Direct Memory Access channels. It will also have an optional Ethernet board which may be included as standard.

• *A2000: Monster upgrade next year*

This is intended to put the Amiga up into the same power bracket as 386 PCs bringing Commodore in line with high end PCs and Mac producers, as well as Acorn's R140.

An optional Unix card will also be available for an extra £1,200 (not expensive by Unix standards).

Commodore's Jennifer Perry confirmed that a high end machine would be arriving in the first quarter of next year. But she warned crystal ball gazers not to expect an Amiga 3000. "The name will surprise a lot of people." she said. She said that no price had yet been fixed and declined to give any specifics.

It has long been presumed that the future Amigas will run a the current 68030 processor. But Commodore is now looking into the newly released Motorola 68040 for new Amiga products.

Portable Amiga fuels handheld speculation

Details last week emerged concerning the much rumoured portable Amiga and the possibility of Lynx-type handheld games Amiga.

The portable will use Amiga technology currently being worked on by Plessey. That electronics company is using the Amiga for its in flight entertainment systems (*Express passim*). Plessey has managed to squeeze three Amigas on to a single board the size of a cigarette packet. It is understood that Commodore has access to this technology and a logical move would be to take advantage of that.

However, don't expect to see anything for at least a year. Commodore does not feel the time is right for a portable Amiga.

Commodore may even use the technology to produce a handheld Amiga as a competitor to Atari's Lynx. The size of the board makes that perfectly plausible.

Oh good grief! That cartoon fan company The Edge has licensed everyone's favourite beagle to star in his very own video game.

Snoopy (or "Joe Cool" to friends) plays a kind of beagle detective on the track of Linus' much loved security blanket which has gone missing - a major disaster, as fans of the cartoon will realise. Unlike other games of the type (including The Edge's Garfield) the game doesn't just have one method of completion. Instead the player must find clues to discover the relevant solution.

The graphics have been designed by Jack Wilkes and include good ol' Charlie Brown, Lucy, Schneider (with piano) and of course Snoopy's pal Woodstock.

Outwit the hackers

A new book has been published to help system managers combat hackers. Called *Computer Security Manager* points out tell tale signs of attempted computer break-ins and suggests ways of blocking every available route. The useful guide also has a list of the best security gadgets on the market.

Computer Security Manager can be obtained from Elsevier Advanced Technology Publications for a hefty £125.

Low cost DTP

Low-cost business software publisher Channelmark is to launch a new £149 DTP package.

Express Publisher is the first in a new line up of Channelmark programs. It offers 300 dots per inch support with two sets of fonts. There are also a few clip art images thrown in and options on all extras DTPish. Call 0276 65272.

Xmas shortages? Surely not...

It's become something of an industry joke that, come early winter, the hardware manufacturers start warning everyone to rush out and buy their Chrimbo computers because otherwise the shops might run out.

This is usually done with a leak to the trade press about shortages. Commodore isn't bothered with such traditions.

In a bold press statement the firm claims to have "shipped out" all its stocks of the Batman bundle and all the C64 packs. It reckons on selling 100,000 of the former and 140,000 of the latter.

Its 16-bit pal Atari (which usually enjoys stirring up a bit shortage fever) probably feels that the joke has gone far enough and is not trumpeting any shortages the ST: "We've always said there would be a user base of quarter of a million the end of the year and it looks pretty good at the moment," offered a kesman.

TOSHIBA NOTEBOOK PC ARRIVES IN UK

The leading manufacturer of portable PCs, Toshiba, has launched itself into the lightweight computer market with a surprisingly cheap version of its Japanese Dynabook.

The IBM compatible will be called the T1000SE here and retails at £1,295. It boasts 1Mb of RAM and has a 3.5-inch floppy drive. the machine weighs in at six pounds and battery life is about two and a half hours.

The clamshell designed PC has a large backlit CGA screen measuring five inches by eight inches. There's also a modem slot and a credible array of expansion ports. "The emerging breed of serious notebook users demands a smaller machine but still needs industry standard storage media and the power to run software found in the office," said Toshiba's Nick Hall.

"I see this machine as the personal organiser of the next decade. We're targeting mobile professionals and field workers who demand maximum portability."

Meanwhile the firm is to launch what's being called the first ever battery powered 386 with a gas plasma screen. These offer clearer graphics and better lighting than ordinary LCD displays. Toshiba, which markets 14 portables in the UK, has priced the high-end portable at £4,195.

• T1000SE: Toshiba attacks

COMMENT

Here come the keyboard kids

It's all rather unsettling: our children will, we are told, be introduced to computers at the age of five in our schools, and by the age of seven they will be familiar with word processing and databases.

But computer use is like music: the earlier the introduction to technology the better. Computing geniuses can reach a sufficiently advanced stage by their teens to be able to push back programming frontiers before the mental 'burnout' hits them in their twenties, as happens to many mathematicians; but more importantly, we shall be bringing up a more computer literate generation.

The word processing angle is the most significant. This is without doubt the most important use of computers in everyday life, but learning to word process has benefits beyond letter writing and business correspondence.

Learning to word process means learning to type, and knowing your way subconsciously round the QWERTY layout speeds up everything else. Even in a database or spreadsheet or special application, keyboard knowledge is invaluable, because typed responses and command sequences can be performed without thinking instead of having to hunt around for COMMAND, SHIFT, F and then K. You never meet computer literate people who really can't type at all, and it's fair to assume that QWERTY literacy is a prerequisite for computer literacy.

And there's more. A properly taught word processing course will teach sensible computer use: correct posture to avoid problems of RSI and back pain, eyestrain and headaches, and so on.

Perhaps most important of all, the early introduction to computers should go a long way to impressing that they are a tool, no more and no less – a tool that can be used outside the classroom too.

The theory is all fine. Now it's up to the Government to provide enough computers. Which, of course, is where it may all fall down.

Second anti-nuke virus attacks NASA

Political activist group Viruses Against Nuclear Killers has launched a second attack on NASA's computers.

The group has inserted the virus in computers in Germany which are linked to the NASA network. NASA was hit by a virus three weeks ago which damaged data in some minor computers.

The second germ is described as "new and improved" and, apparently, can activate strains left over from the first. However, NASA is yet to report any damage.

Viruses Against Nuclear Killers says it will attempt to corrupt the computer systems of those organisations which use nuclear power. NASA was at the centre of some controversy earlier in the year for using a nuclear battery in one of its probes.

• Dalglish: New beginning

Parisian games

The first game from Paris-based Hurikan Software, *Vaux, (pictured left)* will be available for the ST and Amiga. It should appeal to hardened space traders with all the usual 3D docking procedures, nasty pirates, interplanetary police and commodities and dealt in. No beer involved.

It costs £24.95. Call 0480 496497.

Short shrift circuits

For all those talented tinkerers who like to while away an hour or two experimenting with their own electronic circuits comes *CircuitMaker*, a circuit design program for the Atari ST with one major difference: you can test circuits on screen without risking valuable components.

The program allows you to lay out circuits using a comprehensive device library which includes flip flops, multiplexers, shift registers and LEDs. Connections between components are effected using simple point and clicks of the mouse. And when you're satisfied with the completed design you can instruct *CircuitMaker* to dry run the circuit before buying and soldering expensive electronic devices.

CircuitMaker can be used by both amateurs and professionals. There's a series of six experiments complete with solutions designed to get beginners up and running quickly.

The program will work with all Atari STs, supports both colour and mono monitors and hard drives.

CircuitMaker can be obtained from Bath Computer Shack on 0225 310300 for the princely sum of £119.95.

The Kop's Kenny goes on (and on)

Impressions certainly seem to be making the most of its Kenny Dalglish name tie-in. Due for release late in November is a follow up to the successful football management game *Kenny Dalglish Soccer Manager*.

Entitled *Kenny Dalglish Soccer Match*, the game features the arcade action side of football, introducing an "unique new player-control system" and making the most of 16-bit graphics and sound.

The new game is set to be the second of a trilogy, the third game (at present under development) following the trials and tribulations of an individual player trying to get to the top of the footballing ladder. *Kenny Dalglish Soccer Match* will be available on ST and Amiga for £19.99.

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• Fleet Street III: *DTP ST*

Streets ahead

Following on the heels of the immensely popular *Fleet Street* for the Atari ST comes *Fleet Street III*, the latest incarnation of this successful desktop publishing program from Mirrorsoft.

Many of the major criticisms of the forerunner of *FSIII* have been corrected in the latest version, and there are many new features in an attempt to capture the high-end professional DTP market.

Probably the most powerful of the new features is the Ultrascript printing option which allows non-PostScript printers to produce PostScript files. Even basic nine-pin dot matrix machines can reproduce Postscript files to stunning effect.

There's a new scanning feature too, which allows users to import scanned pictures using cheap 150 or 200DPI (dots per inch) scanners then scale them to produce graphics of 600, 700 or more DPI.

Vertical text justification, frame grouping and text wrapping around regular and irregular objects makes *Fleet Street III* one of the most powerful DTP packages available to the home computer user.

Fleet Street costs £199 (or £100 to upgrade from existing versions) and will be available during the first week of December. Contact Mirrorsoft on 01 928 1454.■

'Neglected' PCW gets adventurous

The PCW might not be much use when it comes to superfast shoot-'em-ups but it's a good machine for adventurers.

Artronic is releasing the three game PCW Adventure compilation this week which includes *Sir Lancelot*, *A Simple Case of Espionage* and *Lost Legacy of Xim*. "It's excellent value for this sadly neglected machine," says the firm. It costs £14.99.■

Schools report urges Government:

'GIVE COMPUTERS TO 5-YEAR-OLDS'

Children as young as five years old could be taught how to use computers if the Government accepts new recommendations – a report on teaching technology.

The National Curriculum Council is keen to put a greater emphasis on technology education and wants computers to play a large part in that. The report, published last week, also stresses the need for computers to be used in other subjects such as history, maths, science and geography.

A new subject called technology will be set up. That will be split into two aspects – design technology and information technology. This will run through from five year olds to senior school level.

The report also suggests that the Government spends more money on computers in order to fund this new initiative. It is hoped that Parliament will have accepted these ideas by next spring.

• *Kids and computers: Government urged to act*

Each school will be left to organise its own technology teaching although it is thought that the appointment of "technology heads" will prove an efficient way to proceed.

The council's chairman Duncan Graham commented: "This will break new ground in a number of ways giving all youngsters – and we have so far failed both the most able and the least able – a chance of a broad education in an area where the English system is at its weakest, that is, in meeting the challenge of the real world. This is the biggest step forward and the hardest to put into practice."

However, the computers won't be treated as a subject in themselves. Children will learn to use them by applying the technology to specific tasks. One example which was recommended for six year olds would be to furnish a house by choosing furniture displayed on a computer screen.■

MICE 'N' EASY DOES IT

• *Naksha, a Jersey based company has teamed up with a Taiwanese firm to manufacturer a designer "sophisticated" mouse. The £79 Naksha mouse includes* Deluxe Paint II *painting software, a pop up menu maker as well as a lifetime warranty. It's compatible for the PC, ST and Amiga. There's also a budget version – the Naksha Three costs only £39.95.*■

Plastic magic from Epson

The quest to make computing as portable as possible goes on – Epson has developed a new lightweight floppy drive.

The firm, best known for its market-leading printers, has simply eliminated the weighty steel chassis of its floppy disk drives and replaced it with a newly developed light plastic material. The drives now weigh only 395g, two-thirds of the previous weight.

The firm stresses that the drives are just as robust as the old models. It will be selling them to other portable manufacturers.

The weight of the disk drives is the main limiting factor with modern portables and laptops, which can be a strain to carry around. The new drives should prove popular with manufacturers. ■

Number's up

Looking for a way to turn your ST into an education tool for the youngsters? Then get in touch with School Software.

The Limerick-based firm has been churning out education programs for the Beeb for years but now it's turned it's attention to the ST. First out is *Maths Mania* which comprises of five programs to get kiddies interested in long division, memory training and other mathematical concepts.

Maths Mania costs £22.95 on 010-353 6149477.■

• *Maths Mania: ST learning*

Getting greedy on disk

A new software package has been developed for schools which will put students in the middle of 'Capital City'.

Citylink **has been developed by the International Stock Exchange and the Banking Information Service on order to teach students how things are really done in the City. It includes databases such as the FT Share 100, the current account balance, base and three monthly interest rates as well as updatable unemployment and inflation figures.**

It is hoped that by taking crucial decisions on a computer simulation the students will be able to grasp that every decision taken on the Stock Exchange has implications all over the world. They will be given specific tasks such as a massive privatisation program or a prevention of the collapse of any commodities market. Citylink is on 01 626 9386.■

DIP DEAL FOR POCKET BUYERS

Distributed Information Processing – the firm behind Atari's Portfolio pocket PC – has put together an-all-in one deal for prospective buyers.

The firm sells the DIP PC through specialist dealers (Atari sells its 'badged' version through multiples such as Dixons). It is offering a special bundle to boost sales through owners of desktop PCs.

The DIP will come with a parallel file transfer cable (which will allow fast data transfer between the tiny portable and the desktop). There's also a 64K RAM memory card, a mains adapter and spare batteries.

DIP has also thrown in a number of programs and utilities such as password protection, file directory, printer spool, string search and some programs for batch file programming.

The DIP weighs less than a pound and boasts 356K ROM and 128K of RAM. It has built in software such as MS-DOS as well as a spreadsheet, word processor, phone book, diary and calculator.

"We want to appeal to people who rely on their PC but have to spend a lot of time away from it," said DIP's Peter Baldwin. "It's a complete package and not just some glorified Filofax." The DIP alone costs £220. The bundle weighs in at £399.

• DIP: not just a "glorified filofax

Drivin' Force's telly debut

On Saturday morning, TV watchers will get the chance to see how a computer game is put together. ITV's Motormouth is screening a feature on how Digital Magic came up with its *Drivin' Force*.

The programme will follow the game's production from conception to the final stages. "It gives us the chance to display the quality and speed of our product to people, which is extremely difficult to do for a relatively small company."

Drivin' Force is claimed to run at a staggering 50 frames per second on the ST.

Sweet as Alan Sugar

Despite his much reported troubles Amstrad boss Alan Sugar is still keeping the wolves from the door.

On top of his substantial salary the hard working entrepreneur also earned £3.5 million from his share dividends. These came from the money made last year on the shares he owns in the company.

Spot the ball on computer

A computerised version of spot the ball called Skilball is to arrive in Britain next April.

Skilball will come from America and should be based around their game of American football. To play you have to go to the nearest Skilball computer terminal which will be situated in a shop and slot in your money. You will then be faced with six different screens of a game of football and you will have to "spot the ball".

It is not yet known how the cursor will be positioned to display the choice but it will probably be some sort of trackerball device, and then entries will be sent to a mainframe computer.

There should be around 2,000 terminals and the company which produce Skilball, Golden Grid, expects to expand this number to about 20,000 making this the largest such system in the world. The computer power is to be supplied by Control Data's automated wing section which provides [illegible] lottery systems in the U.S including Florida and New York.

Skilball should generate a staggering two year revenue of $2.7 billion, $750 million which is for charity.

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MAC USER DELIGHTS

This year's Mac User show provided a venue for the latest in the tasty world of the Macintosh: hardware, software, updates, new bits and bytes galore

People flocked in from miles in every direction to see the MacUser show, held this November 1st to 4th at London's palatial-sized National Hall, Olympia. But then as Europe's largest annual Macintosh event, with such a wide range of products on display, those who made the pilgrimage simply wanted to know what on earth would be next. Who could blame them? Indeed, the user had the opportunity to see the newest and the best; and there was something in evidence for everyone.

Multimedia

All of the exhibits drew people numberless, of course, but establishing popularity on a head-count basis alone, multimedia proved itself the arena which aroused the most interest this year. Indeed one had to fight the crowds to approach the display set up by Apple Centre West London. For, in addition to the nifty, time-saving cutting and editing techniques on show vis a vis the *Gallery* (with EastEnders leftovers as the footage being worked upon), Apple Centre West London also had on display its latest, brightest Interactive Television Unit, an interesting Interactive Videodisc and the most recent development of *LaserCast*.

LaserCast, being a specialist service tool, would not be everyone's cup of tea of course, but *LaserCast* does illustrate the remarkable and exciting cutting edge of interactive media. One of the most advanced electronic casting directories of its kind, upon request *LaserCast* will display colour pictures, personal profiles and actors' credits for use by directors and producers. Any queries on any of the exciting Apple Centre West interactive products can be directed to 01-573 7797.

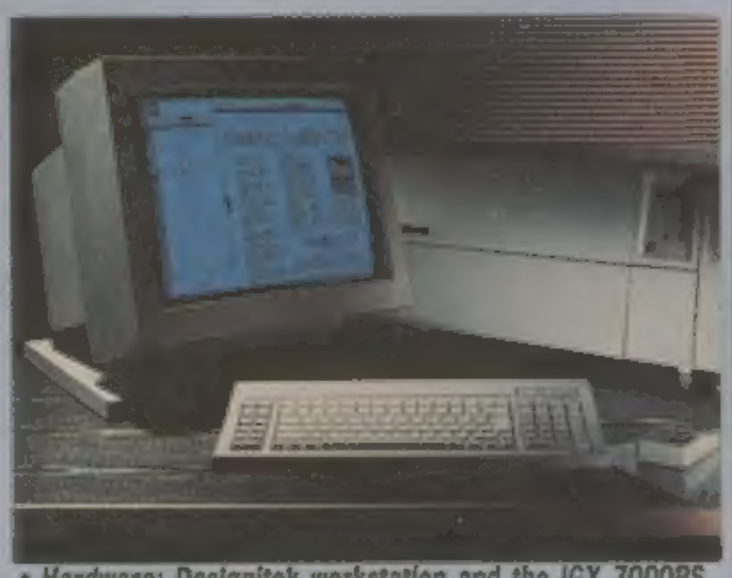
Update Time

For those who are looking for the right move as far as machine updating and are, therefore, pining after a super speed Mac II but find that machine prohibitive in the expense department there was good news from Sun Remarketing of Utah. The company has developed the scintillating idea of remodelling old Lisas to function like MacPluses. Available through MacSolutions 0274 394636, these Lisas, Mac IIs in everything but name, can be purchased for £775.

Images, Images, Images

For those who are involved in the world of image making, Torch Technology and Nortech are at it again, as ever refining and improving image grabbing hardware.

At this year's Mac User, Torch launched its RSVP hardware, a board that allows grabbing video images from either video cameras or video players for later placement into DTP document.



• *Hardware: Designitek workstation and the IGX 7000PS PostScript PDL compatible imagesetter*

• *Above and left. New software and software upgrades were in abundance at the show: StudioCraft and Visual Business No. 5, from Heyden & Son, were at the forefront*

Updated features included: real time image capture, fast hardware zoom and pan, digital contrast & brightness adjustment, amongst others. What is perhaps best about the unit is that it saves images as PICT or TIFF files and can be used for both British and American video standards. Cost: £1395, phone Torch Technology Limited 0223 841000.

Neotech floated its Still Video Control Kit and 24 bit colour adapter board for use with its Image Grabber board. The Still Video Control Kit works with the Canon Still Video range of cameras and players. Still Video Cameras look like standard 35mm cameras but have a CCD chip instead of a shutter, and make use of a video floppy disk instead of film. Each video floppy can hold up to 50 images, and once the floppy has been filled, the disc is dropped into a Canon player. With the Neotech card in place, the user can then catalogue and load files from the player to view and edit images on the Mac. For the answers to any questions or queries, ring Neotech Ltd on: 0703 2270200.●

SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

• A visual authoring system for creating training and presentation on the Mac, *Course Builder* from TeleRobotics International requires no programming ability while being quite powerful and with options to update coursware quickly. Already in use in more than 200 universities and businesses worldwide, *Course Builder*, and more information about it, can be had from Interactive Options Ltd (0425) 472753.

• Voyager products featured included the *Video Stack* and the *Audio Stack*, toolkits for interactive video/audio that allow *Hypercard* stack control over 25 industrial or consumer videodisc players; in this way automatic installation of video drivers is achieved in the user's stack. *Video Stack* also comes packaged with the *Event Maker* which lets the user create motion or still frame video events, while also allowing the user to organise and play back video events in any sequence. Phone the Mac Consultancy Company Ltd 01-792 3311.

• Southbank Studios exhibited the new Macflash 33/32 Macintosh Workstation that uses a 68030 microprocessor working at 33MHz. This remarkable station has 32 megabytes of dynamic active RAM, which doesn't need to access the disk except for saving; everything works in memory and makes use of a special system originally based on System 6.03 for handling memory, fonts and data management. Ring Southbank Studios Ltd on 01-735 9125.

• For 24-bit colour, Raster Ops from deep in the Californian Silicon Valley jungle, offered up a ColorBoard 264, which allows work on over 16 million colours simultaneously. Billed as *the* board to have for combining with a 13-inch colour monitor or with any Mac-compatible 640 X 480 monitor, the ColorBoard 264 does allow the display of over 300,000 colours at the same time.

Distribution is handled by Gomark Ltd, 10 Hurlingham Business Park, Sulivan Road, London, SW6 3DU, telephone 01-731 7930.

• *Hardware: ETAP PICTOR 2, a high contrast 20-inch colour graphics monitor for the serious CAD or DTP user*

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IT'S BETTER ON CD

Erik Vonna-Michell looks beyond the printed page at the optical world of CD-ROM publishing at CD-ROM Europe...

Promoted as the 'European MultiMedia Event', CD-ROM Europe '89 was the first major exhibition attempting to come to grips with the issues surrounding CD-ROM from a users point of view. From October 24th to 26th at the London Novotel Hotel, 23 exhibitors presented the latest advances and news in CD-ROM technology.

But what is CD-ROM?

In 1985 Philips Electronics in the Netherlands and Sony in Japan launched the 'Compact Disk Read-Only Memory' publishing media, popularly called CD-ROM. CD-ROM is based on the same principals as CD-Audio allowing the handling of digital information in compact disk format. A typical CD-ROM disc can hold over 600 megabytes of data or the paper equivalent of 200,000 sheets of A4 paper. In addition to text; audio, graphics and video information can be presented. And like printed paper, it is a read-only media which can not be changed or erased once it is 'pressed' or 'printed-to-disc'. To use a CD-ROM a personal computer requires the addition of a special CD-ROM drive. A standard audio CD-ROM player will not work with a PC as the error and format tolerations operate in a different way. On the other hand, CD-ROM drive units designed with the higher specifications required for computer data can easily play back music from standard audio only CDs.

Beyond CD-ROM

The objective of CD-ROM Europe '89 was to provide a platform of conferences and exhibitions surrounding the user's and publisher's perspective. In addition a great deal of discussion centred around the application of new CD-ROM formats and Digital Video Interactive (DVI). DVI is a new format developed by General Electric in the US. Recently Intel purchased DVI and is continuing its development to allow PCs to access video signals directly from CD-ROMs and other external sources. Currently IBM has joined development with Intel to include DVI handling capacity for its range of PCs. Apple Computers on the other hand is producing its own CD-ROM drives and is further developing software as navigation tools for a entire multimedia publishing platform.

Year of the CD

CD-ROM Europe '89 had very little new in terms of hardware or new CD-ROM title releases.The main conference and exhibition emphasis was placed on new CD-ROM production services, presenting new expanded CD-ROM and Video Interactive formats and software imaging and navigation tools. A prime objective of the event was to enable optical publishers, CD-ROM disc producers and 'end-users' an opportunity to meet and discuss the present state and future direction of the market. Almost all the software and hardware products on display were either for Apple Mac or IBM compatibles or combined dual-format products enabling the same product to be used on either system.

It's early days yet. A recent survey indicated that over the last three years less than 200,000 CD-ROM players went into operation in the combined USA & UK markets. And within that market there are currently some 600 CD-ROM titles with the 'average user' having not more than two titles. 1990 looks set to be the year of the CD-ROM with around 2,000 titles planned to be released and the current price of CD-ROM players which hovers between the £500 and £900 mark set to drop to the £300 entry level in the imminent future.

ON THE HARDWARE SIDE ....

• Left: Comcen Technology presented one of the first CD-ROM portables. In essence the 'portable' is a £3,500 MS-DOS compatible computer complete with an internal CD-ROM drive, hard disk and high resolution plasma display screen.

• Right: NEC Ltd. presented their new range of CD-ROM drives which are compatible for both Apple Macintosh and IBM PC compatibles. Prices range from £649 to £799 for either internal or external drive units. In addition the new *Image Folio* and *Clip Art 3-D* CD-ROMs were on display.

SOME EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

• At centre stage Next Technology Corp. from Cambridge announced 'Pressed for Time'. A unique service which allows direct-to-disk CD-ROM production. This allows publishers the facility to publish small editions of one-off CDs without the requirement for a master. As the name implies the service is very fast enabling the turn-around of a CD-ROM in a matter of hours instead days.

• Attica Cybernetics the Oxford based CD-ROM specialist announced the award of a major development contract from the Learning Technology Unit. The training system which Attica will develop will use Digital Video Interactive (DVI) technology on CD-ROM to handle over 2,000 moving sequences showing phrases in British Sign Language. The system is being developed in conjunction with the Deaf Studies group of Bristol University. The CD-ROM training system is hoped to reduce the waiting list of over 100,000 normal hearing people who want to learn the language to converse with deaf colleagues or family.

• BRS Software Products of London was demonstrating a range of CD-ROM titles including the Whitaker's BookBank CD-ROM Service. The service provides a new disc every month with on average of 5000 new book titles and up to 100,000 monthly changes to price and availability.

• Clarinet Systems Ltd, demonstrated for the first time a new CD-ROM based technical documentation and diagnostics system for field service engineers.The CDs included full-motion video using DVI technology. In addition Clarinet Systems provides bureau services to convert multimedia information into electronic formats for CD-ROM publishing.

• Genome, a company specializing in the creation of CD-ROM imaging tools for the Apple Macintosh was demonstrating the ease of CD-ROM creation with a selected package of storage devices. The basic theme was: "If you are in the Apple Macintosh world of computing, you can get into CD-ROM publishing much easier and more cheaply than other computer users". In short, just load everything onto a large hard disc and get it cloned as a CD-ROM.

• Office Workstations Ltd.(OWL) of Edinburgh presented its unique authoring and navigation software package *Guide*. The new version which runs on both the Apple Mac and IBM systems enables complete text and graphic navigation with 'hypertext' style linking. In addition OWL demonstrated their new CD-ROM publishing system based on a combination of 'hypertext' linking and full-text retrieval. *CD-Word* a comprehensive biblical research was also announced.

• Nimbus Information Systems which is the CD-ROM division of Nimbus Records, presented its £90.00 *CD-ROM Toolbox 1*. The toolbox is collection of audio control programs which enables music and speech to be integrated into a CD-ROM navigation system.

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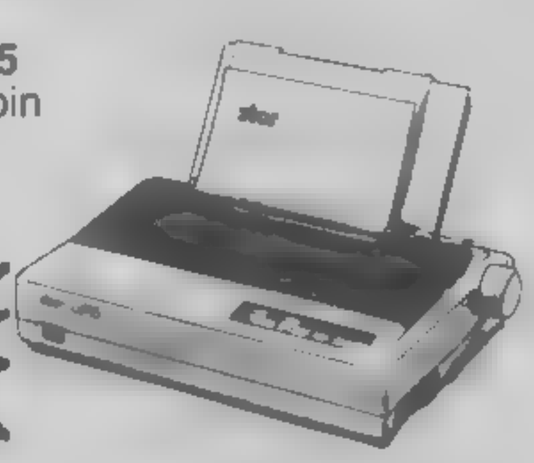

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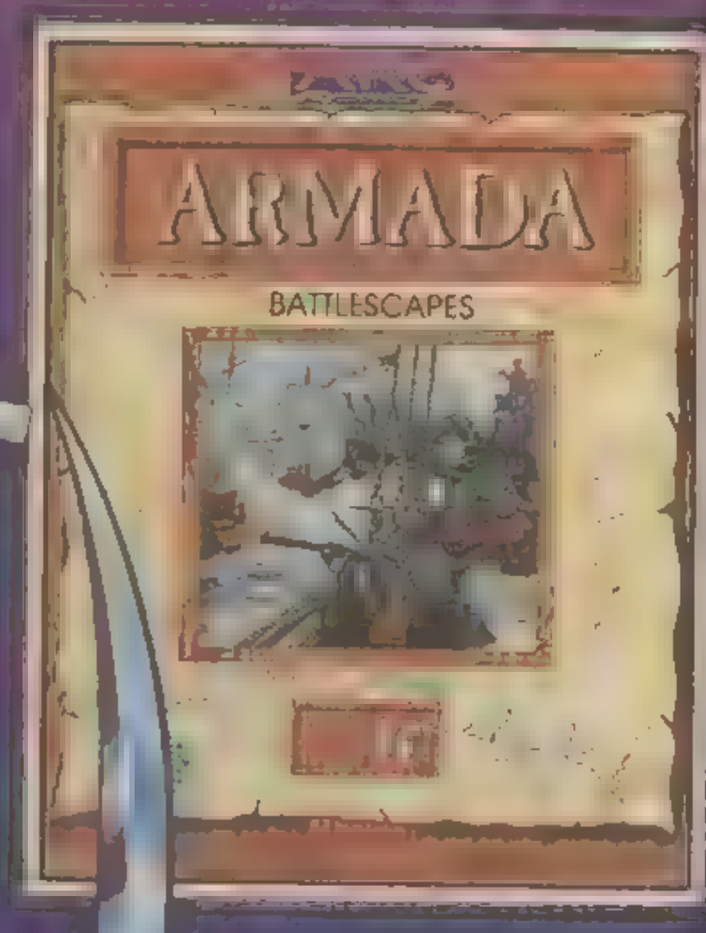

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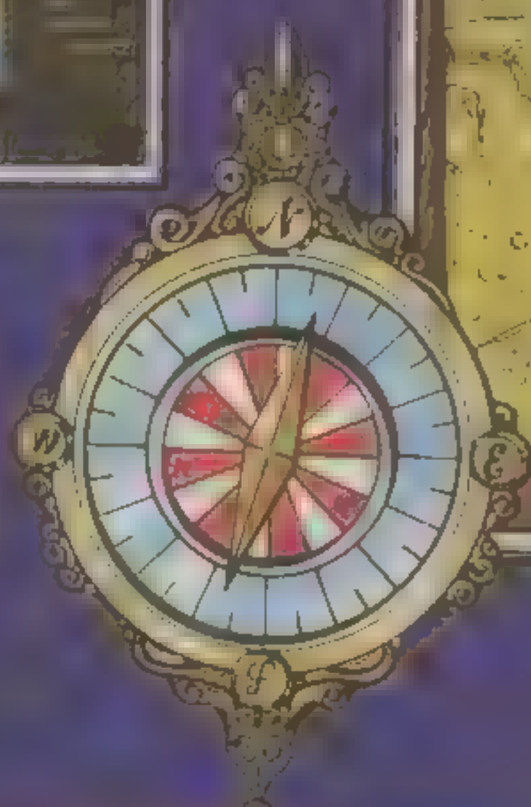

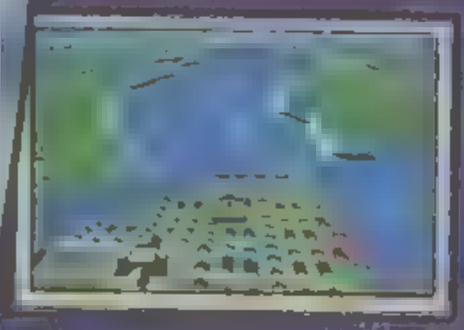

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THE PARTICIPANTS

1. Michael O'Carroll, 30, Parish Priest in Cork.
2. Nick Hughes, 19, student from London.
3. John Morris, 30, unemployed of Newcastle.
4. Andy Rae, 22, who runs a small photography business in Glasgow.

THE DATE

November 6th-13th 1989

1 Michael O'Carroll: Parish Priest

What I am looking for is a simple way of writing letters and producing newsletters. I don't need PC compatibility because I'll be working exclusively at home. I'm not interested in games, and an ST or Amiga does not appeal. What I want is an easy to use package.

Many of my friends have Amstrad PCWs and this is what I think I would like. It has a printer, a monitor and some word processing software, and importantly it comes all set up so that I don't have to worry about configuring the system or setting anything up. I can get it from my local Dixons and don't have to wait for a mail order company to deliver. It is the cheapest option I can see, and it gives me everything I need, so why pay more?

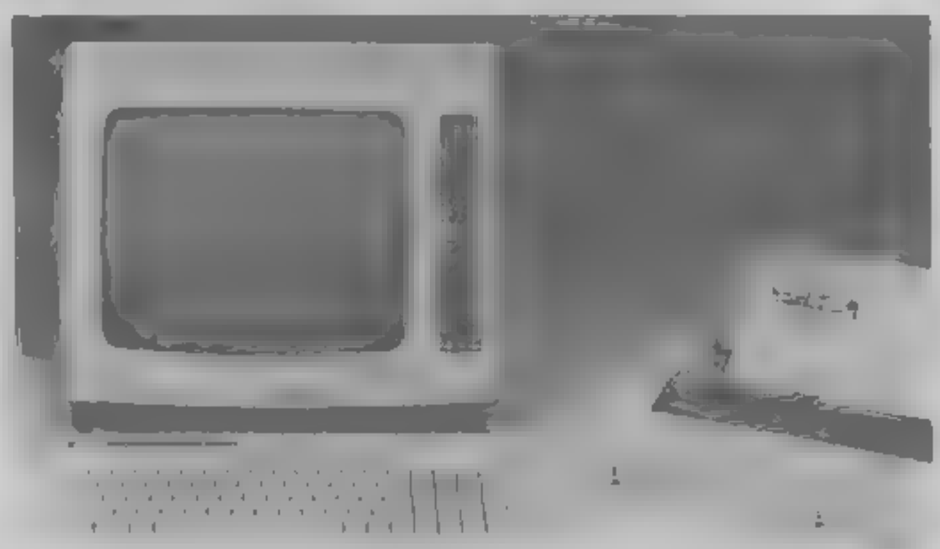
Although the three inch disks are a little non-standard, my local typesetting bureau accepts the format, and I can prepare the parish magazine in *LocoScript*, hand the disk to them, and receive perfectly typeset professional-looking pages for the printer for around £2 a page, but the output from the dot matrix printer is fine for my correspondence.

It only costs £401 for the basic model, the PCW8256. This has one disk drive and 256K memory. With the £99 I have left, I can afford to buy some faster word processing software such as *LocoScript 2* (£30) or *Protext* (£50) or a desktop publishing program such as *Micro Design* (£50) or *Stop Press* (£70).

Or I can go for the PCW8512 with two drives and 512K memory (the extra drive holds 720K instead of 180K in the normal drive). It costs £516.35 in the High Street shops but I've seen it mail order for £470.

The entire system comes as one package, so I have no tedious setting up. And I still have plenty of money to invest in software. The PCW makes £500 go a very long way.

Verdict: PCW 8256 £400 (includes monitor, printer and *LocoScript* software) plus *LocoScript 2* £30 and *Stop Press* £70



2 Nick Hughes: Engineering student

I wanted a system to cope with my course work and essays. I suppose I really wanted an ST or Amiga - great for the games. However, with games at £25 each (I'm very honest and wouldn't consider getting pirate copies) I'm not so sure. I don't think my grant would stretch that far!

I didn't go for a PCW, though a couple of other students have them and they're very good. (*LocoScript 2* can cope with some of the more obscure mathematical symbols we need in Engineering). The reasons were compatibility. The Engineering department has PCs and so trying to transfer any data from the department micros (where I work) to my micro at home would be difficult.

Also, having my data on a PC disk means I can print out stuff on the department laser printers. There are also quite a few special stats programs the department has that I can use which are all MS-DOS based.

So, I decided to go for a cheap PC, in fact, the cheapest reasonable one I could find! Oddly enough there were no second hand PCs going (I checked the noticeboards around campus) and so I decided to go for a new one. Besides I thought a new one would be more reliable, and I don't want my term's work being inaccessible if it goes down.

The problem is with price. As far as I can see the cheapest PC I can get by mail order leaves me virtually no money for a printer or software. But, hang on a minute, do I need a printer in my room? I can use the department's laser to print things out, and besides, it would be too noisy! I can also forget the software as the department has a licence for us to use *WordPerfect*, I think.

Now, I could go for an Amstrad PPC512D, the portable, which has two drives and is £499 including VAT. But the screen isn't good enough for desktop use, I think. Another option would be a cheap PC without monitor (Atari PC2, say) plus a TV adapter (£45 from Vine Micros on 0843 225714) but that wouldn't really be good enough for word processing.

I think I'll go for an Amstrad 1512 with single drive. Evesham Micros (0386 765500) do one for £447 including VAT, courier delivery and a mono CGA monitor, good enough for word processing, just about. And I can get £6 off with Express vouchers (on the cover of Shopping Express). This includes the *Ability* suite of word processor, database and spreadsheet. A bit dated, but good enough for my needs, and anyway I can use the department word processor and other software.

Now, I could really do with two drives – one really is tedious to use. The Amstrad 1512 with double drive is £549, so unless I bust the rules, I'll have to look around for an external second drive, maybe second hand. I should be able to pick one up for the £59 I have left.

When I've saved up enough I can expand my system – get a hard disk, my own printer, modem, or my own word processing software. But for now I can work in my room and I can print out at the department on a laser printer. I don't have a full system yet, but the main thing is I've got a foot in the compatibility door.

Verdict: Amstrad 1512SD £441 External drive £59 Total £500

CESSING FOR £500

3 John Morris: Unemployed

I decided to get everything second hand. After all, I'm not used to spending money on new things. For £500 I reckoned I can get the best system of the lot by shopping around.

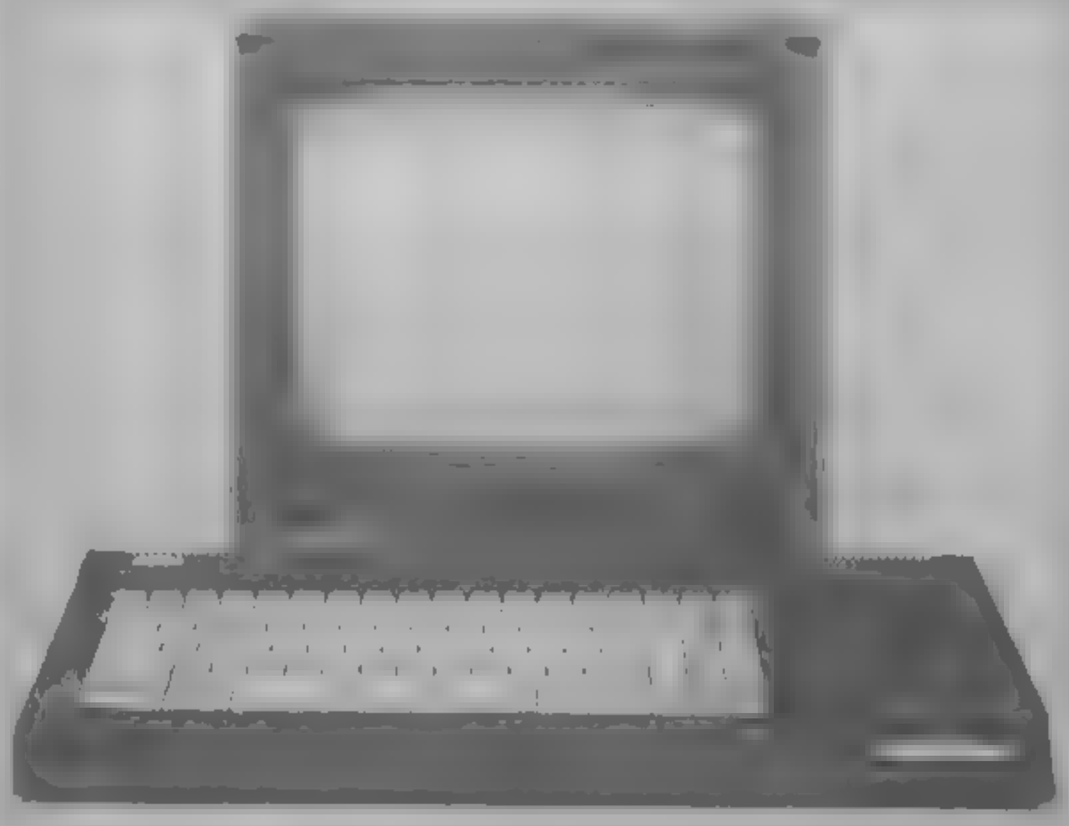
What I want is really an all-purpose computer and, this is important, a good printer. I figure that when I'm applying for a job or writing a letter to my MP I want the letter to look smart, so I'm going to try and get a 24-pin printer. But the make of computer really doesn't matter: ST, Amiga, CPC, PC, I don't care so long as it can word process, and so long as I can play games on it to while away the odd afternoon.

Through the local paper I picked up a virtually new Amstrad CPC6128 with a disk drive, colour monitor, joystick and a bundle of about 20 games for £250, with a bit of bargaining.

I couldn't find a 24 pin printer second hand, but through Shopping Express I got a Panasonic daisywheel printer from a chap in Leeds for £160. However I'm adding the £10 I spent on petrol to go and have a look at it! The daisywheel quality gives output as good as an electric typewriter. But as it eats up carbon ribbons I think I'll also add £20 for four of those.

With the software I might have to swallow my pride and buy something new. I knew Protext on ROM was supposed to be good, just there in the memory as soon as you switch on, and so fast to use! I bought it for £40 (from Arnor on 0733 68909).

So, £480 down and £20 to go. That leaves me plenty of money for paper and envelopes. Of course it wasn't as easy as it sounds getting all this, and I had several wasted evenings looking at gear that was too old and worn out to be worth considering. But I've got the best set up of anyone.



Verdict: Second hand Amstrad CPC 6128 £250
includes colour monitor, joystick, various games
Second hand Panasonic Daisywheel Printer £170
Protext on ROM £40
Paper etc. £20
Carbon ribbons £20

4 Andy Rae: Glaswegian photographer

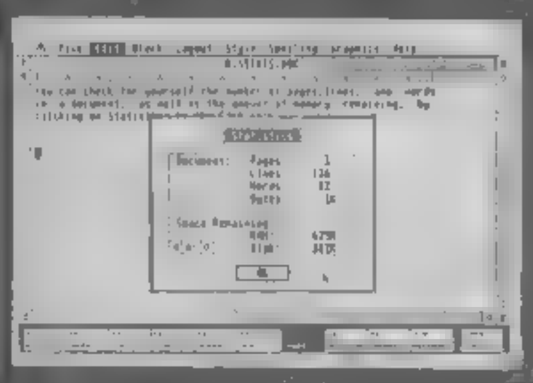
To me money's word processing is only part of the equation for me. I'm not interested in PCs or PCWs which frankly I think are boring and old fashioned. I want a machine to play games as well as word process. After all I only do the odd letter and a little business correspondence. I'm quite happy to pay £2 for an good game so it comes down to a choice between the ST and Amiga.

I suppose given a bit more money I'd go for the Amiga but the ST is cheaper and gives me the money to get a printer and monitor. The thing is that although the Amiga and ST can come with TV modulators word processing on a TV screen is no a room for the eyes – a mono monitor is quite OK for word processing and one I can be used for those colour games.

Looking around the mail order ads in Express I see that I can get a 520STFM for £270 including 1 Meg disk drive, modulator leads and a mouse. Mono monitor costs £100 including lead making the total £370. Express vouchers save me £6 on that making the total £364 ... £370 with next day courier delivery.

Which leaves me with more money for a printer, because the ST comes with First Word which is OK for the word processing use I want. Which isn't that much ... monochrome matrix printer for me as I don't need more than the occasional letter and a program listing so 9-pin quality will do. For £130 I can get an Olivetti DM100S from Evesham Micros (0386 765500).

That's a whole system for £500 and I'll have the chance to play games on it too. Now all I've got to do is get a job ...



Verdict: Atari 520 STFM £264
Monitor £100
Courier delivery £6
Olivetti MD100S printer £130

There's no catch. We're giving you the Atari 520 STFM and £500 worth of great software titles for just £399.99.

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EXPRESS MAIL

Dear Reader

Another collection of comment, controversy, compliments and Rob Ainsley spreplies. Have you got something to say? Make your voice heard in computing's liveliest letters page. Send your contributions to **Express Mail, 1 Queen Street, Bath, Avon BA1 1EJ**

PS. Sorry, but we just don't have the time to give personal replies, whether you include an sae or not. We're too busy putting Express together.

MIRROR, MIRROR

Around two months ago I purchased *Dungeon Master* for my 520STFM. I had earlier read reviews and so I thought that it would be an excellent addition to my software collection, and how right I was.

Anyway, getting down to the gist of it, after about a week or so I noticed that after about half an hour of playing, all of my characters would die at once for no apparent reason. I had kept my disk write-protected and so it couldn't have had a virus.

Before I sent my disk, I also tested the disk on my friend's ST so my computer wasn't at fault.

I promptly sent my original disk back to Mirrorsoft expecting a replacement in about a week or so. I had previously sent my *Falcon* disks back to them and I had replacements within 10 days.

It has now been six weeks and there has not been any sign of my disk. I have written several letters to them asking them for the return of my disk but I have not heard anything from them.

What are Mirrorsoft playing at? What else can I do except send off another letter which I know won't be replied? Is there any advice you can give me?

I would appreciate any help you can give me as Mirrorsoft seem to have just kept my disk. At this stage, I don't even care they send the faulty disk back, I just want the disk they owe me.

David Brass, Great Haywood, Stafford

• *I'm sure your disk just got mislaid somewhere and that once Mirrorsoft read this, being the jolly helpful and professional company it is, will send you a new Dungeon Master, with bugs fixed. If not, get back to us and we'll run a series of exposes on companies who don't return customers' disks.*

AREN'T WE GOOD

I am writing to you to say thank you for restoring my faith in industry magazines. Other reviews of Interactive '89, the multimedia show, are very unrepresentative of the state of this industry. Yours, in contrast, is the most balanced I have seen and clearly you spent some considerable time talking to exhibitors and getting your finger on the pulse of developments.

I wish you all the best and sincerely hope that you keep up the good objective views and reporting as so far demonstrated.

Graham Waldron (Managing Director), Interactive Options Ltd, Ringwood, Hants

• *Gosh, thanks very much. All in a day's work.*

DEAD CERT

Now I'm not one to kick a man when he's down but I wouldn't be surprised if the Archie ended up in the same state as the guy that it's named after - very dead! Do you know why it's called an Archimedes? Because when an Archie owner finds a piece of software - any piece of software he exclaims Eureka! I've found one!!!

Oh! By the way, I have a message for all members of the Archimedes Owners Club - will you both meet on Platform 2 at Liverpool St Station....

R Chapman, Suffolk

• *Sounds like the venue of the next meeting of STE Software Developers (a phone box in Slough) owners of the Welsh version of PCW LocoScript (the back seat of a Mini in Bangor) and PC2000 owners (in the smallest, most cramped place of the lot – Amstrad's Hospitality Suite at the PC Show).*

OFF THE CUF

Use of information technology is expanding rapidly. Concerns about software bugs, fatal flaws and lethal loopholes, critical safety and lax security are also growing. All users and vendors pass the buck, blame each other and third parties for the flaws. There is a need for a common code of practice for all users and vendors in Europe.

All interested parties are hereby invited to help CUF draw up and finalise the code, which should be available early next year.

CUF would like to hear from all IT users; vendors; law enforcement and government agencies; computer fraud/crime officers; data security experts; Royal Signal and Radar Establishment; GCHQ; banks; insurers and financial bodies; accountants; lawyers; DP and MIS managers; users groups; BBS users and operators; shareware authors and vendors; system analysts and programmers; computer dealers; Defence Standard 0055/56 experts; telecommunication companies; and their respective representative bodies.

CUF would also like to hear from British Computer Society, Health and Safety Executive, CBI, Law Society and other professional and trade associations or institutions.

The code will concentrate on IT safety and security, and will also cover networking and telecommuting/ telecottages. Please submit your views or suggestions, along with a copy of any code of practice you use, as soon as possible to the Chairman, CUF, 1 Stuart Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR4 8RA. Thank you.

Parveez Syed (Chairman), Computer Users Forum, Surrey

• *Good luck – we'd be interested to see what transpires. And I hope you can find a lawyer who won't charge you for writing with information.*

QUALIFIED SUCCESS?

I am in confusion over my intended career. The one I intend to follow is working on a computer magazine as a software reviewer or something similar. I am confused on what qualifications I should

FRACTALS AND FIGURES

Early this year you kindly printed a letter of mine introducing my journal *Fractal Report*. I thought that you (and possibly your readers) might be interested in how the newsletter has fared.

We are now up to issue 5, with issue 6 appearing in January. Enquiries from the letter in *New Computer Express* continued to come in many months after publication, and the take-up on enquiries has been over 40%. We have not so far been sent an article on fractal music or prose, but all the other topics mentioned in the initial flyer have been covered. Naturally there has been a lot on the Mandelbrot Set, including an article from Dr Dietmar Saupe, editor of *Science of Fractal Images*, the Springer Verlag "coffee table" fractal book. Most popular, though, have been the many short articles that included BASIC programs for popular microcomputers. We have given programs for many and varied common and not so common fractals.

A feature of the magazine has been a competition run by one of our readers whereby the specifier of the most interesting image gets a full colour print from a £3000 graphic printer. There are also offers from readers of cheap software, ranging from a £2 68000 machine code QL Mandelbrot/Julia program with a 268 million resolution to PC programs costing up to £15. The latter offer sophisticated fractal exploration facilities, and one even provides a special compiled fractal language which approaches assembler speed in execution.

The original volume of *Fractal Report* will remain in print indefinitely, and a free sample, which now includes a fractal planet Jupiter simulator program in BASIC, four dimensional fractals, affine transformation, and more, is available for the asking. A 30p stamp is appreciated for postage. Send to West Towan House, Porthtowan, Truro, Cornwall TR4 8AX.

John de Rivaz, Truro, Cornwall

• *Keep up the good work. Fractals is a great area because as well as the mathematics of it, which I am sure is Very Important and Very Interesting, there are all those nice pictures that make you think of Rorschach inkblot tests. I'm sure the fact that it can be illustrated will make it No. 1 in the mathematics popularity charts for the next decade. Ever tried drawing a four dimensional Hilbert Space or an Abelian group?*

• Fractals from Fractal Report

consider to further my career and chances to get work of this kind.
Lee Coles, Didcot, Oxon

• ***A computer science degree might help, but to be honest the qualifications are largely irrelevant. What you certainly need is a sense of humour, knowledge in breadth and depth of home computers, and most importantly, excellent English skills – there's no getting around that. Your GCSE results don't matter, but if you can't write clear and sharp copy to deadlines, forget it.***

What you should do is ring up a few of your favourite magazines (probably ones for the home micro you yourself have) and find out what they might consider for publication from you: games reviews (you'll have to ring a software house that's bringing out a new game and see if you can persuade them to send you a review copy) or an interview with someone well-known (of course, you'll have to organise it all yourself!).

Once you've got yourself in print a few times, then you'll look very good on paper when you apply on spec to one of the big computer magazine publishers, like us.

CHRISTMAS BOX

I am looking round for a computer which I can use for school use and good for playing games. I like the look of the CPC 464 or 6128 but is it good at printing out school work? I also need a A4 printer to use for under £110, can you help? Also I like the ST, is that better for school use? If so can you tell me where I can buy a A4 printer for that under £110.

Can I buy a computer and printer together which is good for school use? Can you tell me quickly so I can get it for Christmas.
Mark Ford, Nechells, Birmingham

• ***The CPC is, in my mind, a very underrated machine and would suit you fine. The quality of the printed output depends on your printer, not your micro, and so it might be worth getting a 24-pin printer (£200+) if you can afford it. Alternatively, nine-pin dot matrix printers start at about £100 – just scour the mail order ads in Express. The Star LC-10 is everyone's favourite.***

A computer and printer together good for school use? Aha! Then the Amstrad PCW8256 is what you need, and get Locoscript 2 from Locomotive on 0306 740606, which can do all your maths for you. Well, it can print it out, anyway.

Have a look through our 'Express challenge' on page 14 and 15 of this week's issue.

VIRUS TIME

I am writing to express my distress at a new turn in the long running virus saga. Last Sunday morning 29th October, I woke up and went to do some work on my PC. To my horror, I found that my machine had been hit by a virus, causing the real time clock to gain one hour!

How relieved I was to then find that Microsoft actually supply a command, built in to DOS, to get round this very virus. In case this virus has affected any other of your readers, the virus killer is called TIME and allows you to reverse the potentially catastrophic consequences of this dastardly virus.

I was in fact hit by a similar virus last spring, that caused my real time clock to lose an hour, but thought this was a one off, and did not bother to alert Dr Solomon. I am somewhat surprised, that in the present climate, this virus has not been more widely reported in the press, and hope that this letter will act as a warning to other PC users to stay on their guard.
Steve Godwin, Sutton, Surrey

• ***Another hitherto unpublicised virus is the 'Friday Afternoon Virus'. This is a worm that infects computer systems at that time and causes tasks to be performed slower and slower until by about four thirty they stop altogether. Is your company infected?***

SUGAR PUFFS

I am appalled by your recent comments on Amstrad in your magazine. Firstly, in two successive issues you twisted the truth by misquoting Alan Sugar: "At Amstrad we (just) want your money". This presumably refers to a business article where Amstrad was seen against the giants in computing. A tongue in cheek Sugar cut through the corporate veil: "At Amstrad - we want your money" (admit you added the word 'just'). It was meant to express his business philosophy at the time: stack them high and sell them cheap, never mind the latest technology.

We have all benefited from Sugar's imagination. Before Amstrad, the computer business was engulfed with a certain aura of exclusiveness and high tech type, if I may say so. The CP6128 and the PCW8256 were both milestones in practical computing for the people. Sugar acted honourably by recalling the doubtful 2286 controller, this of course cost him money. Why do you now go on saying that: "Profits are likely to halve again". This is pure speculation anyway. I can understand if Sugar is fed up with you lot.

Amstrad has many cards up its sleeve, I hope that we shall see many more imaginative products from this company. In the meantime, I understand that Sugar is not the kind of person you see at city parties. Finally, I am a happy Amstrad user, and have no connection with the company.
John Anderson, Denham, Bucks

• ***We have all benefited? Tell that to the 150 workers just laid off at Southend.***

Of course, we were wrong to say that profits are liable to halve again. It was far too optimistic and generous. Looking at Amstrad's six monthly drop of £75 million profit in the first six months of the last financial year to £2 million in the last, things look much worse than that for the next six months.

Imaginative products? Which ones? The PC200 was maybe imaginative – I can't imagine anyone who would buy it.

I'm a happy Amstrad user too, having a PC and PCW. But while the products are pleasant to have in your house, I wouldn't say the same for some of the company employees.

OCEAN WAVE

Can I use your letter page to thank Ocean Software for their kind free replacement of the *Run the Gauntlet* disks I had damaged by using a virus killer (seems they are dangerous in wrong hands).
P Bool, Cleveland

• ***Yes, you can.***

PIRACY PT 928708

First of all congratulations on a great weekly magazine. I follow with great interest the pros and cons of piracy and the high cost of software etc. While you will never completely stop copying and hacking I feel prices are a different matter.

Who makes what out of the software market? Is the price fixed by the software house? If so they must be in league with each other. There appears to be no competitive pricing to sell goods as in almost any marketable item on sale in the shops.

The high costs not only apply to games but serious software as well, for example a well-known word processor on sale at around £80 can be bought for £46 and the dealer still makes a profit.

I would like to see an article on where our money goes, who gets what out of our £24.95 or so, what profit do stores take. And if mail order companies can sell the same games at up to 50% less than just who is ripping who off?
D Clifford, Swindon, Wilts

• ***There was an article in issue 28 of Express detailing all this. Basically of the £25, the taxman gets 15%, the retailer 40%, the distributor 5% and the software house 40%, or £10. Of that tenner, development takes £3, admin and advertising £4 and manufacturing costs £2.50, leaving 50p profit. This is why 16-bit games are unlikely to come down in price!***

SAM LIKE IT HOT

Having waited patiently, along with countless thousands no doubt, for the emergence of the SAM Coupé, it is with disbelief that I hear that the price of this new machine is going to be in the region of £250. I find this quite ridiculous when compared to the 520ST-FM. That machine has everything the SAM will have except the sound capability and Spectrum compatibility. It even has double the RAM and comes with graphics interface and mouse. In your very own magazine the ST is on offer for £249 and even £179 if you can put up with 500K drive.

Why is it that computer manufacturers always have to wait two extra years or so (Acorn?) before they realise that the public are not going to part with that sort of money on an untried machine when other machines have cornered that niche of the market.
Warren Sutherland, Moulton, Northants

• ***Well, we shall see. The SAM is a niche market product and I think it'll do well in the area at which it's aimed, i.e. Speccy upgraders. It won't challenge the ST as a mass market product, though.***

PROGRAM AND BE DAMNED

There have been many letters concerning the cost of games software, and the arguments to whether houses are justified in charging such high prices. It was not until the last issue that any emphasis has been put to the majority of games programmers who get the rawest deal at the end of the day.

Many punters believe that programmers earn a big wage, pulling in hundreds of thousands of pounds for each game. The truth is that if a programmer works for a software house, he gets about £1 out of every 24 made. This is because the shop keeper keeps around 50% with the rest going to the software

PEDANT'S POINT

(Strictly, not a point, but an area, in fact)

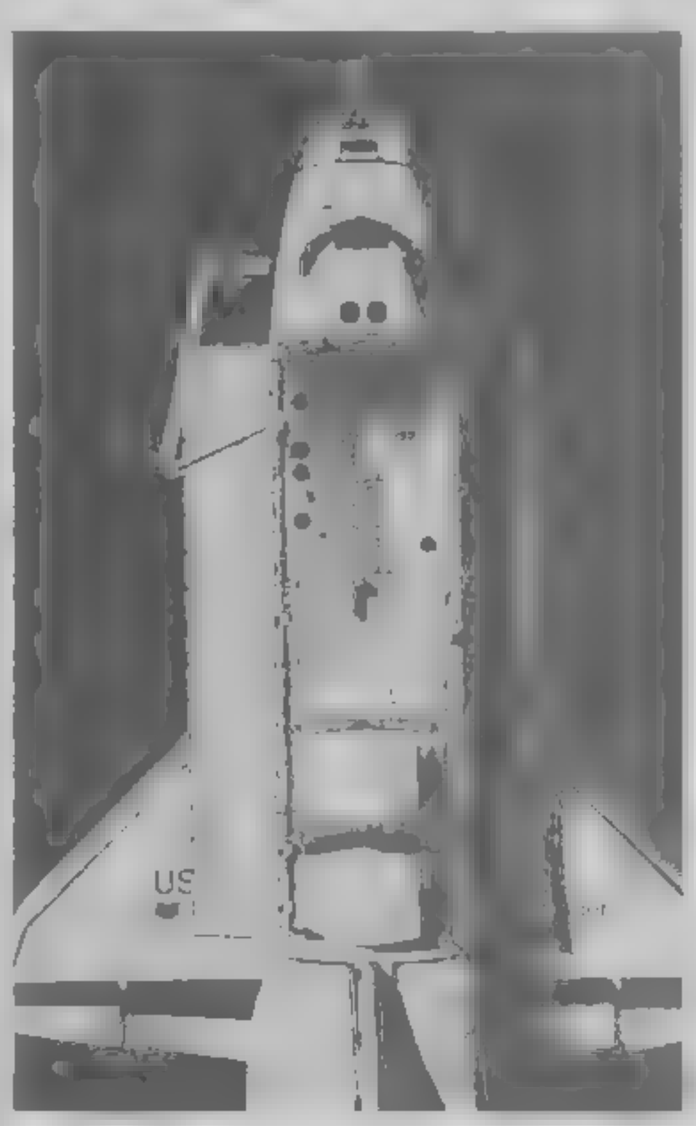
SHUTTLE SERVICE

The Space Shuttle does not use nuclear fuels, as was stated in your NASA/virus article. The main rockets use liquid hydrogen and oxygen, leaving only water vapour as waste product, and the electricity supply comes from fuel cells which also use hydrogen and oxygen as fuel.

The solid fuel rocket boosters use a mixture of ammonium perchlorate and powdered aluminium as a propellant. This sounds alarming, but the burn products are harmless aluminium oxides (already widely present in the earth's crust) and fertiliser.

What the protesters were upset about was the nuclear fuel in the small reactor powering the space probe that the Shuttle was carrying into orbit on the first leg of its journey to the gas giants.

Apparently they felt that there was a possibility of radioactive pollution if the Shuttle had a catastrophic accident on launch, although I would very much like to hear one of them explain how planting a virus in NASA's computer network was supposed to reduce the risk.
Iolo Davidson, Tetbury, Glos



• ***Space Shuttle: not nuclear power, but fertiliser. And that's not just a load of bull.***

• ***The 'nuclear powered shuttle' was down to a combination of human and computer error, sorry.***

Let's hope that journalists using Macs never get a chance to fly on the shuttle.

house. This works out about £7-8000 a year after tax if 100,000 copies were sold, which is good going for a game. Bearing in mind that the programmer takes between 1 to 3 years to accomplish his masterpiece, this is a pretty rotten income compared to commercial programmers in the business end of the market.

The programmer puts the most effort into the game, he plans, he decides, he codes. The software house would argue that they are the experts who advertise, package and distribute, which makes a game sell. This is really hard work isn't it? It must takes years of training to put an advert in a magazine, and phone up a duplicating company. The skill the software house can be accredited for is setting the deals with their contacts (fifty-fifty - that's really clever). But it's not enough to justify the costs.

Programmers have to live. What makes it worst is that it is the software house that takes the credit. How often do you hear the author's name mentioned when a game is being reviewed? In books, it's the author's name that's most important - splattered clearly on the cover. The clever programmer can't rely on his name printed on the disk/ tape cover, he has to small print it on the opening title (if he's allowed).

Is there any wonder why the games industry is moving so slowly after the boom in the mid-eighties? Have the programmers wisened up or are they merely browned off? Will they go public domain? After all they'd earn about the same and it would eliminate hacking. Alas, if cartridges take over, the poor programmer would be denied even this option.
Andy Williams, London

• Certainly it seems programmers have a raw deal, though technical authors don't get that much money. A technical book might earn you little more than £1,000 for three or four months' work – but at least you'd get paid some of that in advance and all the balance on delivery of the manuscript.

ARCHIE VS AMIGA

Your issue dated 28th October had coverage of the 'Amiga Bashing' Archimedes. Being lucky to have access to both machines (my Dad owns the Archie) I thought that I might make a few points in the Amiga's favour.

Although the Archie exhibits raw meaty power, it relies too heavily on the ARM processor. The Amiga has custom chips which handle sound and graphics independently of the processor, effectively DMA co-processors. Multi-tasking becomes much more useful on the Amiga without slowdown for samples and graphics.

The graphics facilities of the Archie are justifiably flaunted. But the Amiga has a few aces up its sleeve. The Archie has no hardware sprites or scrolling. The Amiga's Blitter can make stunning transformations of up to one million pixels a second (witness *Interceptor*!)

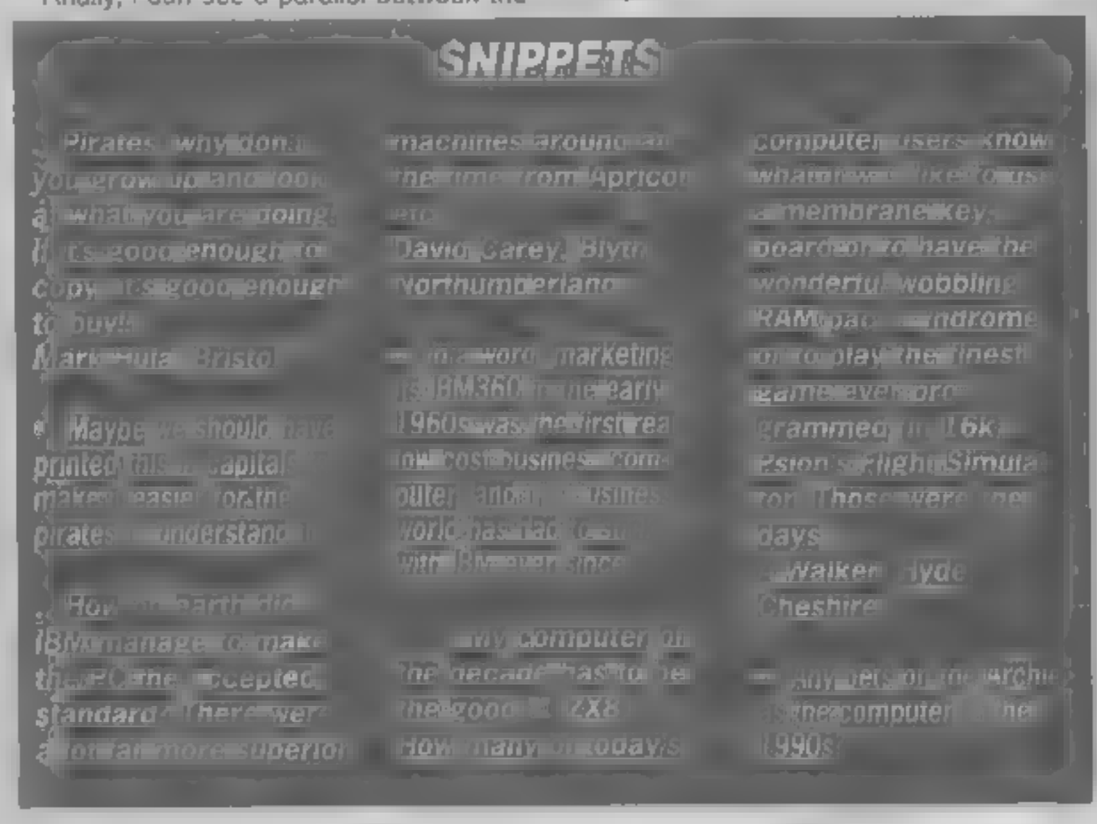
The Amiga's HAM mode enables broadcast-quality pictures of 708x580 resolution with the complete 4096 colour palette displayed on-screen. This is why Disney, NASA and Channel 4 use Amigas. It is important to note that all this can be displayed on a standard TV. The Archie demands an expensive multisync monitor for decent resolutions.

Bertrum Carrot in his article pointed at the wonderful Archie graphics packages that are being released. If I was a graphic artist, I would buy the Amiga for *Sculpt-Animate 4D*, *Deluxe Paint III*, *Photon Paint II*, *X-Cad Professional* and *Videoscape 3D*. The quality of Amiga software is light-years ahead of Archie rivals.

While we are talking figures, there are over 1,100,000 Amiga users in the world with over 2,000 software packages for the machine. This easily beats the number of Archimedes and Apple Macintoshes combined!

Finally, I can see a parallel between the C64/Amiga and the BBC/Archimedes. The BBC was blessed with a good operating system and fast processor. It lost out when compared to the C64 with its custom graphics and sound chips and massive software base. This is why the C64 is the world's best selling computer while the BBC hardly made it out of the classroom.
Fergal Moane, Belfast

• I'm sure there must be a joke about NASA using Amigas and crashing space shuttles, but I'll resist the temptation. And if 'Disney' use Amigas, that seems to me a very good reason to buy an Archimedes. Still, like I said before, if I could afford one, I'd get an Archie rather than an Amiga.



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THE SHOPPING EXPRESS GUIDE TO THE TOP WORD PROCESSORS

The most vital piecee of computer software for most serious users is the word prrocessor – many use their micro for nothing else. Here is Express' verdict on the best you can find

Probably the most important 'serious' use of your micro is word processing. Anything from a letter to a novel is better prepared on a micro than on a typewriter: editing is easier, and you can keep making those final adjustments right up to when you decide to print.

All word processors allow you to create, edit and print simple documents, and all word processors allow you to store documents on disk or tape for retrieval at a later date. All let you move, copy or delete blocks of text, and use a variety of type styles. And you can set up different layouts – change margins and tab settings in a document and so on. Many packages allow you to write 'macros' where you give a series of commands which can subsequently be enacted with a single command or keystroke (for example, copying ■ the chapters of your book from one disk to another for backup just by the one command DO BACKUP or suchlike). Fine for letters or doing the odd bit of writing.

Expensive word processors have extras like spell checking facilities, word counters, the ability to display bold or italic or different type size effects on screen ('what you see ■ what you get' or WYSIWYG) and/or mail merge (where you can send letters to each name in a list with each person's details automatically included at the top of the letter). 'Serious' use – for writing or business – will demand a program like this.

Really advanced programs let you include graphics in a document, work on several documents at once each in a separate 'window' on screen, automatically generate footnotes and indexes and bibliographies and so on. This is for the professional – the large-scale business user, academic or writer.

Here's the Express guide to the best word processors for each machine. A brief description and the highlights and drawbacks of each are included. In 'Value for Money' five stars ■ the maximum.

PC

● PROTEXT V4

£100 • Arnor • 0733 68909

For sheer text and file handling Protext stands out. It's fast, flexible and full of features; good spell checker and mail merge facilities so powerful you can write program-like text and file handling routines. A must for writers and journos.

▲ Fast
▲ Spell checker
▲ Powerful mail merger
▲ Powerful macros
▲ Loads of extras – calculator, word counter etc
▲ Two file editing

▼ No real graphics capability
▼ Not good at handling complex layouts

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

● TASWORD

£50 • Tasman Software • 0532 438301

Superb value and fast. A few odd limitations but an excellent basic word processor. TasSpell, the spell checker, also available, along with TasRes, the memory resident version of the processor.

▲ Memory resident and fast
▲ Easy to customise
▲ DOS shell macros
▲ Word count, notepad features etc

▼ Clumsy text insertion
▼ Some limitations – find and replace won't accept spaces, blocks must be whole lines etc

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

● CELEBRITY

£80 • Software Paradise • 0222 887521

A well designed word processor with a lot of extras and plenty of appeal for the first time user. It doesn't show the compromises usual with beginner's packages.

▲ Good clear command structure
▲ Calculator, calendar, DOS manager etc
▲ Thesaurus and spell checker
▲ Up to four text windows

▼ Thesaurus US and a bit slow
▼ Window dimensions fixed

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

● MULTIWRITER 2

£115 • NewStar Software • 0245 265017

A very powerful package that includes many features usually found only on really expensive word processors. WordStar dot commands can be included directly in a document so this may be ideal for WordStar diehards. Lots of extras – author's utilities and a filing program, for example.

▲ WordStar compatible
▲ Good menu and context sensitive help
▲ Extras: contents and index generator etc
▲ Filer utility

▼ Filer awkward to use

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

● BORLAND SPRINT

£199.95 • Borland • 0734 320022

A hugely powerful word processor – certainly worth looking at if you need the complete works. Breathtakingly fast with an autosave feature that means even if the power goes your document has been saved exactly as it was at that moment. Comes with front ends that make it look like WordStar, WordPerfect, MultiMate or Microsoft Word if you're used to those packages. A bit complicated to use though and modelled on C, which doesn't help.

▲ User interfaces for WordStar etc
▲ Thesaurus and check-as-you-type spell checker
▲ Cross-referencing
▲ Very powerful indexing facilities
▲ Laser and PostScript support

▼ Very complex to use – only get it if you really need all the power
▼ Still a few little bugettes

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

● MICROSOFT WORD

£395 • Microsoft • 0734 500741

Another of the heavyweights. Packed with every feature you can imagine, but you're paying for it. Easy and intuitive to use for such a high-powered package – ideas outliners, contents/ indexing and footnotes, very good graphics facilities – and of course it runs under windows and OS/2.

▲ All the heavyweight features:thesaurus, spell checker, author utilities
▲ Ideas outliner
▲ Good graphics import facilities
▲ Runs with windows and OS/2
▲ Easy to use

▼ Very pricey
▼ Need a powerful machine – slow unless you have a 286 or 386

● WORD PERFECT 5.0

£425 • Sentinel • 0932 231164

The biggest selling word processor on the PCs, and the *de facto* stnadard in academia. A huge program with everything you could ever need: thesaurus, spell checker, two column text, footnote and index generation, automatic date insertion, end notes, mathematical symbols etc etc etc. Frankly though a disappointment for the huge price; only any use if you're already committed to the program because of training – or if you can get it on expenses.

▲ Everything you could ever need in a word processor
▲ Exemplary manual
▲ Available on minis, mainframes as well as micros
▲ Good discounts for educational users (but still expensive)

▼ Vastly expensive
▼ Some very complex keystrokes for functions – must ■ learned by rote

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★

● CHIWRITER

£92 • Shareware Marketing • 0297 24088

The word processor for scientists. Originally a shareware product, this word processor lets you design and use predesigned fonts for scientific use. Can cope with any mathematical symbols – even the most complex integrals for example. The most impressive WYSIWYG you'll ever see! If all you want is a word processor that can handle the odd bit of

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REPAIRS FOR AMIGA AND ATARI

maths, have a look at LocoScript PC before you decide between the the two.

▲ Handles any maths – integrals, complex set theory symbols etc
▲ Does foreign characters too
▲ Footnotes and font designer

▼ Limited as a word processor: no mail merge, word count only after spell check
▼ Only one document at once
▼ Hidden extra costs for hi-res or screen

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★

● TOPCOPY PLUS

£109 • Innova Software • 0453 835379

Big brother of Topcopy – a very powerful and well-featured word processor. Verging on the 'big league'. Very fast – memory resident – and keeps everything reformatted as you go. Multi document handling together with the speed of operation makes it ideal for people who shunt text around a lot. good spell check and mail merge too.

▲ Memory resident
▲ Can import text from defined areas of underlying screens
▲ Auto reformats but still fast
▲ Three files on screen at once, handles up to six documents
▲ Spell checker and mail merge
▲ Very fast

▼ One or two useful commands missed or difficult to find
▼ No auto backup of files

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

● GALAXY

£42 • Shareware marketing • 0297 24088

One public domain word processors that resembles WordStar. Doesn't compete with ones you pay a hundred quid for, but for the price of a disk you get a program ideal for occasional use.

▲ Menus
▲ Spell checker
▲ Very reasonable price

▼ Restricted power – best for occasional user

ST

● 1ST WORD PLUS

£79.95 • Electric Distribution • 0480 496789

The big brother of 1st Word, the program that comes with the ST, this handles graphics and can even capture screens directly in Degas format. Lots of good features, but the keystroke sequences can be a bit tedious.

▲ Reads Degas, Neochrome and Doodle format pics
▲ Spell checker
▲ Mail merger
▲ Multi column printing
▲ Fast and efficient
▲ Good display

▼ Keystroke sequences get tedious – no shortcuts
▼ Have to save files before printing
▼ No index on manual!

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

● WORD WRITER

£79.95 • Electric Distribution • 0480 496789

This is a great little WYSIWYG word processor without graphics facility but excellent text handling – spell checker, mail merger, thesaurus. Good shortcuts which you can make up yourself. Outliner included to help you structure your writing. Only grumble is with its layouts – having more than one in a document is very awkward.

▲ Spell checker, mail merger and thesaurus
▲ Excellent shortcuts – delight to use
▲ Outliner included to help you structure your work
▲ Good use of mouse

▼ Layouts restricted

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

● PROTEXT

£99.95 • Arnor • 0733 68909

For sheer text and file handling Protext stands out. It is fast, flexible and full of features; it has a good spell checker and mail merge facilities so powerful you can write program-like text and file handling routines. For writers and journalists this is a must. Although odd on the ST as it doesn't use GEM, Protext is really a powerful keyboard-driven text editor.

▲ Fast
▲ Spell checker
▲ Powerful mail merger
▲ Powerful macros
▲ Loads of extras – calculator, word counter, memory editor etcetera
▲ Two file editing

▼ Restricted WYSIWYG
▼ Ignores GEM totally
▼ Command driven – no menus

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

● THAT'S WRITE

£129 • Cavendish • 01 323 4761

A powerful, non-GEM word processor that offers many features not found on many other programs. Produces great printed results and this machine is excellent for the 'printout-oriented' user. Font designer, facility to grab screens, WYSIWYG, automatic index and contents generation, hyphen control etc. included.

▲ Excellent printed results, good layout control
▲ Contents and index generation
▲ Good font use – font editor too
▲ Powerful macro system

▼ Manual dodgy
▼ No spell check/ mail merge/ graphics
▼ Funny screen fonts

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

● WORDUP

£59.95 • HB Marketing • 0895 444433

This is almost a DTP package with some excellent features like graphic import, automatic text flow round graphics, lots of different type sizes and styles. Great for producing fancy and

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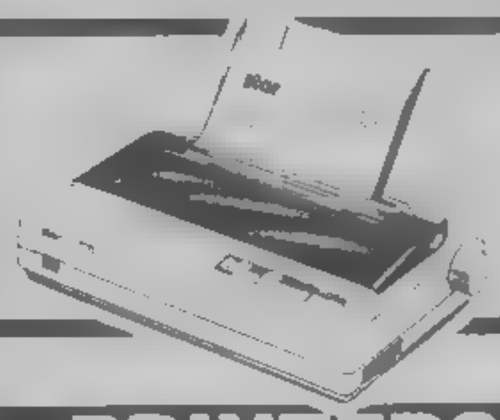

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impressive looking documents.

▲ Good choice of fonts
▲ Lots of control over style
▲ Graphics import
▲ Auto text flow around all the graphics
▲ Mail merger

▼ Can only print Wordup's fonts
▼ Best with a laser or a 24 pin printer
▼ No spell checker

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★

AMIGA

● PROTEXT
£99.95 • Arnor • 0733 68909
For sheer text and file handling Protext is the best Amiga text processor. It's fast, flexible and full of features; good spell checker and mail merge facilities so powerful you can write program-like text and file handling routines. For writers and journos this is a must. Odd on the Amiga as it doesn't use windows - it's really a powerful keyboard-driven text editor.

▲ Fast
▲ Spell checker
▲ Powerful mail merger
▲ Powerful macros
▲ Loads of extras - calculator, word counter, memory editor etc
▲ Two file editing

▼ Restricted WYSIWYG
▼ No windows
▼ Command driven - no menus

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

● KIND WORDS 2
£49.95 • Amiga Centre Scotland • 031 557 4242
A good value budget word processor with spell checker and import of graphics. New version has thesaurus and British dictionary. New fonts and a few extra features included too.

▲ Good standard word processor
▲ Spell checker
▲ Mail merger
▲ Graphic import

▼ Best for occasional user - no sophisticated layouts etc

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

● EXCELLENCE
£154 • Micro Systems (US) • 0101 407 7900770
Does everything WordPerfect does and more (see PC section) - checks your spelling as you type, imports graphics, checks your grammar and offers suggested improvements. For the really serious writer.

▲ Graphics import
▲ Spell checking as you type
▲ Mail merging
▲ Grammar checker
▲ Contents/ index/ footnote generation
▲ And everything else

▼ Expensive - can you get what you need cheaper?

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

PCW

● LOCOSCRIPT 2
£25 • Locomotive • 0306 740606
If you like LocoScript 1 (which 8256 and 8512 owners get free) you'll love LocoScript 2 (which 9512 owners get free). Faster than version 1 (but still slow) it can jump to a specified page instead of scrolling through, supports Cyrillic, Greek and mathematical symbols, works with any printer in the world, lets you design up to 16 characters yourself, and offers a range of add-on fonts for the printer. There's even a database add-on available separately, LocoFile.

▲ Faster than version 1
▲ Unrivalled printer support
▲ Can make 16 design characters
▲ Greek, Cyrillic, maths symbols
▲ Extra fonts available
▲ Database available

▼ No word counter
▼ Still very slow
▼ Can't exchange printer codes

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

● PROTEXT
£59.95 • Arnor • 0733 68909
For sheer text and file handling Protext beats everything else on the PCW hands down. Fast, flexible and full of features; good spell checker and mail merge facilities so powerful you can write program-like text and file handling routines. For writers and journos this ■ a must. The word counter is invaluable and block moves are so fast you'll wonder how you ever survived on LocoScript.

▲ Breathtakingly fast
▲ Spell checker
▲ Powerful mail merger
▲ Powerful macros
▲ Loads of extras - calculator, word counter, two column printing etc
▲ Two file editing
▲ Vital if you use any CP/M programs (database/spreadsheet etc)

▼ Not good at handling complex layouts

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

● MINI OFFICE
£30 • Database • 0625 878888
A five-in-one package, the word processing module doesn't quite rival LocoScript or Protext, but is nevertheless a full-featured and useful program. And you get a database, spreadsheet, comms and graphics module as well. Whatever you do don't buy the more expensive Mini Office Professional Plus, which boasts a spell checker and thesaurus: they're both very disappointing.

▲ Fast, full-featured word processor
▲ Very fast word counter
▲ Exotic features - auto Roman page numbering, reversed out printing, double height characters
▲ Mail merge
▲ Database, spreadsheet, graphics and comms utilities included

▼ No accents or foreign characters
▼ No phrase facility
▼ Curiously flimsy feel
▼ No interchange of data possible between spreadsheet/ graphics/ word processor

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

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1040STFM Business Pack
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- ★ Atari 1040STFM Keyboard with 1 meg memory and 1 meg built- ■ disk drive plus TV modulator.
- ★ £385 worth of Business Software including MICROSOFT WRITE word processor (£150), SUPERBASE PERSONAL Database (£60) and VIP PROFESSIONAL Lotus 123 Spreadsheet clone (£150). Metacomco Basic (£25.00)
- ★ All leads, manuals and mouse.

MEGA 1 BUSINESS PACK
£529.00

Features:
- ★ Separate Keyboard and System Unit
- ★ All the Software included with 1040 STFM Business Pack.
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Amiga A500 BAT Games Pack
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Inc VAT and Next Day Delivery

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● NEWWORD
£70 • NewStar Software • 0245 265017
Very like WordStar 4 but only ideal if you or those who will use the PCW were trained on that and can't manage anything else. Just possible some businesses would find it useful though not for the individual.

▲ Full featured word processor similar to WordStar
▲ Good at conditional merging, nesting and chaining of multiple documents and data files
▲ Very flexible and powerful

▼ Not as good as LocoScript or Protext

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★

CPC

● PROTEXT
£19.95 tape, £26.95 disk, £39.95 ROM • Arnor • 0733 68909
For sheer text and file handling Protext stands out. It's fast, flexible and full of features; good spell checker and mail merge facilities so powerful you can write program-like text and file handling routines. Get the ROM version – it's a delight to use.

▲ Fast
▲ Spell checker
▲ Powerful mail merger
▲ Powerful macros
▲ Loads of extras – calculator, word counter etc
▲ Two file editing

▼ Maximum 22K file size on disk, 38K on ROM
▼ Not good at handling complex layouts

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

● MINI OFFICE
£14.95 tape, £19.95 disk • Database • 0625 878888
Not a full featured word processor but nevertheless a very useful program. It is fine for occasional use – letters, the odd essay or article and so on. You get a database, spreadsheet, comms module and graphics utility free but they don't work they work separately from the word processor.

▲ Good basic word processor
▲ Database, spreadsheet, graphics and comms utilities included

▼ No interchange of data possible between spreadsheet/ graphics/ word processor
▼ Not as powerful as Protext

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★

● TASWORD
£19.95 tape, £24.95 disk • Tasman Software • 0532 438301
Special versions for 464, 464D (using disk drive) and 6128 which uses the extra memory to best effect. Latter pair include mail merger. Fairly easy to get to know and it has comprehensive help screens. Screen operations can be slow but can also be customised for greatest speed.

▲ Good printer control handling
▲ Easy to use
▲ Simple mail merger
▲ Good help screens

▼ Can be a bit slow

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

● BRUNWORD
£30 (6128 disk) £25 (464 disk) • Brunning Software • 0245 252854
Complete package: word processor, spell checker which loads into the extra memory, and card filing program. 40, 80 and 128 column modes and fast screen response. Easy to learn and good value – possibly this has the edge over Tasword as the best CPC wp after Protext.

▲ Fast screen response
▲ Spell checker with 30,000 dictionary included
▲ Card filer included

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

C64

● EASY SCRIPT
£50 • mail order houses
Highly regarded word processor, but no longer in production; you'll have to try the mail order places. Get this if you can't get PaperClip

▲ Easy to use and well featured

▼ 40 column only

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

● PAPERCLIP
£50 • mail order houses
In many people's minds, the best of the 8-bit word processors around. Again, you'll have to phone round mail order places to get hold of one, but it'll be well worth it.

▲ Two documents open simultaneously in windows
▲ 40 or 80 column modes
▲ Spell checker
▲ Macros facility

▼ Difficult to find!

SPECTRUM

● TASWORD
£13.90 48K, £19.95 Plus 2, £24.95 Plus 3 • Tasman Software • 0532 438301
Special versions exist for each machine. Easy to get to know and comprehensive help screens. Screen operations slow but can be customised for greatest speed. A versatile and well featured program. This is the only real word processing option for Speccy owners.

▲ Good printer control handling
▲ Easy to use
▲ Simple mail merger
▲ Good help screens

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

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● WORDWISE PLUS
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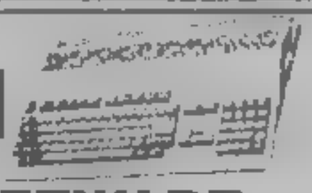

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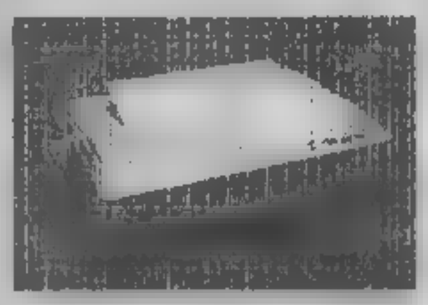

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▲ Fast and intuitive
▲ Flexible printer control
▲ Good macro facility
▲ Available on ROM

▼ Only 40 column
▼ Must be technical to use printers to fullest

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

● INTERWORD

£56.35 • Computer Concepts • 0442 63933

Part of a series of programs – Interbase, InterSheet etc – which work as an integrated suite. Available on ROM, 80 columns, spell checker etc. Easy to use and offers most facilities you'd find on a word processor of this price.

▲ Spell checker
▲ ROM version available
▲ Can link up with other Inter- product to form integrated suite
▲ Easy to use

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

● VIEW 3

£44.95 on ROM • Micro power • 0532 436300

A perfectly usable word processor. Works in 80 columns.

▲ Fast and on ROM
▲ Good usable word processor

▼ Limitation on length of document

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

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● 1ST WORD PLUS

£79.95 +VAT • Acornsoft • 0223 245200

The Archie can use all the BBC word processors thanks to its built-in emulator, and, if you buy a PC emulator, those as well. (It would be best to go for a fast PC program such as Tasword or Topcopy resident in memory).There's not much choice among Archie word processors, but this port across from the ST version is a good fast and easy to use program. Spell checker included and works in graphics mode giving good graphics capacilbes – you can import them into documents easily. Not restricrted to a particular printer

▲ Fast and easy to use
▲ Good graphics capabilities
▲ Good spell checker
▲ Multi column printing
▲ Good display

▼ Keystroke sequences get tedious
▼ Have to save files before printing

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★

QL

● TEXT 87

£45 • Software 87 • 33 Savernake Rd, London NW3 2JU

Probably the best of the word processors you can buy – Quill comes free with the QL course and is quite adequate for most basic uses. Fast, handles text in columns, has lots of fonts and displays most of them on screen.

▲ Good powerful word processor
▲ Multi column
▲ Much faster than Quill
▲ Good range of fonts

▼ A bit complex to use

VALUE FORMONEY ★★★★

ATARI 8 BIT

● ATARIWRITER

£37.95 • mail order houses

Good disk-based word processor with plenty of features. You'll have to phone round the places that sell Atari 8 bit software mail order.

▲ Spell checker
▲ Two column printing
▲ Two document editing
▲ Good block handling

● PAPERCLIP

£50 • mail order houses

In many people's minds, the best of the 8-bit word processors around. Again, you'll have to phone round mail order places to get hold of one, but it'll be well worth it.

▲ Two documents open simultaneously in windows
▲ 40 or 80 column modes
▲ Spell checker
▲ Macros facility

▼ Difficult to find!

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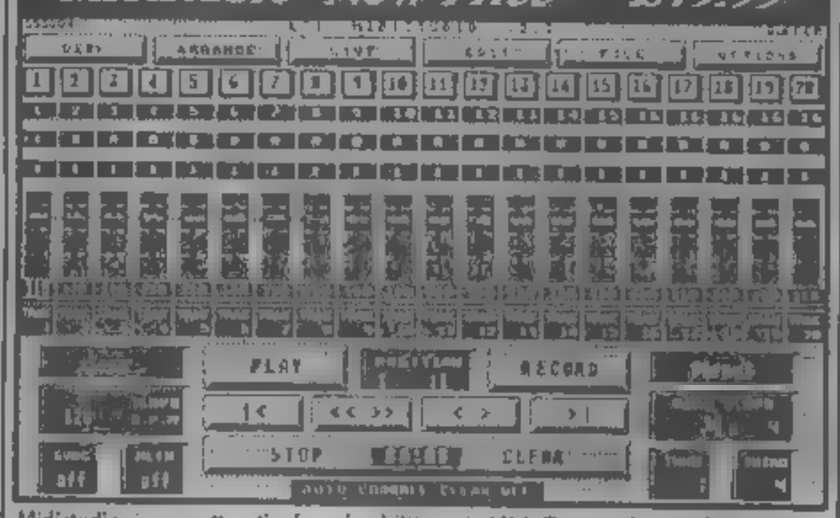
Midistudio New Price - £49.99



Midistudio is an attractively priced 20 track Midi Sequencing package. It can record up to 682 bars per phrase(pattern) on up to 100 phrases. Any phrase can ■■ placed on any track. Tracks can be soloed and muted and tracks and phrases can be named. Program numbers can be displayed in a variety of ways including 0-127, 1-128, in banks from a11-b88 or a01-b64. The desk features sliders to set relative volumes on each track and you can even do a mix on the fly. Midistudio also has a clock to display the length of the last playback. Midistudio has step time note edit functions including copy, split, merge, append, and transpose, velocity editing(including a humanize function), full controller editing and quantizing. **Demo disk £3.99**

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* All these printers carry a 12 months on site warranty and come complete with cable On site warranty UK Mainland only.

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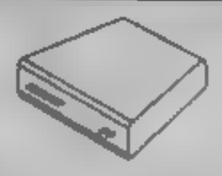

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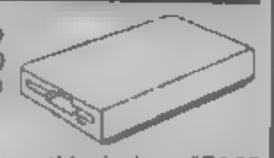

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* Please check machine configuration before ordering. Fitting prices quoted for machines not previously tampered with. Due to the complexity ■ the installation we must install and upgrade the ST board for you. All upgrades and repairs carry our 3 months parts and labour guarantee.

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* Network up to ■ 32 ST's
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The Power Pack software consists of Organiser software, First BASIC, First Music, and twenty top quality games.

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Others	phone	Disk drive cover	£2.99

Computer Systems

DTP Packs £phone
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The PC 4 has an 80286 processor running at 8 or 12 MHz, 1 Mb of RAM, ■ Mb hard drive, 5 AT and 1 XT expansion slots. For mono (Amber) monitor add £100. Phone for VGA.

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URGENT help needed for Speccy game - Hacker Two. Please send any tips and maps etc to:- Wai Tong Chai. 16 Portobello Road, Portobello, Wakefield, West Yorkshire. WF2 7JJ.

SOMEONE Who has digitising facilities, I'm on the Amiga and I need someone to digitise me some pictures for a small cost. Tel. PC on Worthing (0903) 691909.

HACKING Deflektor tape to disc, also Operation Wolf and Renegade Write to Chris, 6 Frank St, Great Horton, Bradford

SUPERBRAIN Q.D. Can anyone obtain for me, wiring diagrams PSU and monitor especially needed Will pay all expenses Write to, 19 Saintfield Rd, Belfast, BT8 4AF or Tel. 0232 642687.

AMIGA owner with Swift 24 printer, spent hours trying to get then running, but can only [illegible] it on typewriter mode New to comp's, any help phone (0530) 72564.

AMIGA educational progs wanted, age 6-10 Write to: Andrew, Welland House, Welland Buildings, Caerphilly, Mid Glamorgan. Hi [illegible] Chris!

DOES anybody use a spectrum 128+2 (tape), VTX 5000 modem and hush printer? I need someone to help me adapt my editor program, [illegible] it will print Prestel frames [illegible]: 0249 443977.

● HELP OFFERED

SOMEONE who can video digitise photos, mags etc..... will gladly sound sample anything they want done - write now! [illegible]: Neil Mansell, 53 St Marks Road, Canvey Island, Essex, SS8 9NJ don't delay!

"DUNGEON Master", any problem, any level. Completed 7 times! ST/Amiga Will assist any way I can Please phone (most evenings 7 10pm) (Weekends) Mike. 0743 249094 (Also SSI's - "Rings [illegible] Zilfin" and "Sword of Sodan").

TO PCW beginners Locoscript, Newsdesk International SAE [illegible] John Peters, 299 Southway Drive, Southway, Plymouth Devon, PL6 6QN. Share a problem, find an answer!

ANYONE with PC hardware/software compatibility problems or having trouble deciding which PC compatible to buy Call Paul on 061 962 7934, evenings This is a completely free service!

STUDENT offers help with all aspects of MS-DOS, including Batch Files and Pipes/Filters Send Query [illegible]. N Stubbs, 8 Lindrum Ave. Lyme Green. Macclesfield, SK11 0LG.

TO all Pascal programmers If you have any problems or just want [illegible] write something Send me a letter and I will try to help you! To: Sioe-Lin Kwik, Richmond College, Queensroad, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 6JP

● GOODS WANTED

WANTED CPC 464 Firmware [illegible]anual also MPUI Modulator Mr. [illegible] Catleush 16C Blackton Close Newton Aycliffe Co Durham. DL5 7EY.

WANTED A3 Plotter HP Compatible good condition Also I/Face for Amstrad PCW 8256 Ring 0742-360010 Evenings or weekend.

Glam Slam I want an AMPLIFIER for electric guitar will swap for Sega system: gun and 8 games phone Ahmed (0222) 487794 (Cardiff) after 6pm all offers considered hurry!

SWAP Yaesu FTZ9 [illegible] Transmitter with Mutek Board, Nicaps, equipment for Amiga or ST computer (one meg drive), also sell, exchange ST games contact Steve 0302 876354 after 6pm.

URGENTLY wanted Devpac 2 Assembler for A500 Must have all instructions Also wanted Amiga Rom Kernal Books and 68000 Books Write C J Dichburn 12 Eden Court ST. Andrews, Fife KY16 9BD

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MONO card (Herc or MDA) wanted for PC Also Monitor Must work and [illegible] Dirt Cheap, or trade Modem, printer buffer/converter, Caplink software Phone 0453 860827 ask for Trouble!

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WANTED Atelier 2 and Render Bender for the Archimedes ring with your price on 0282 602836 ask for Phillip.

WANTED: Mono Monitor Compatible with Atari ST. Nothing special, must be cheap also wanted: Amiga 500, no games or rubbish phone Neil, (0273) 503547 after 7pm be ready with price.

SWAP Sega system (one joypad) with 5 games for an Auto Modem Must have RS232 Lead, ST Comms software and manual. Must [illegible] in excellent condition. Tel (0698) 832550 Stuart.

COLOUR Monitor Amstrad CPC Type. Devon or Cornwall Area please Tel 0637 877026.

WANTED C64 and Amiga Demos (disk only) send to DW. [illegible] Vayre Close, Chipping Sodbury, Bristol, Avon, BS17 6NT. Hi to S.A.E and E.S.A.

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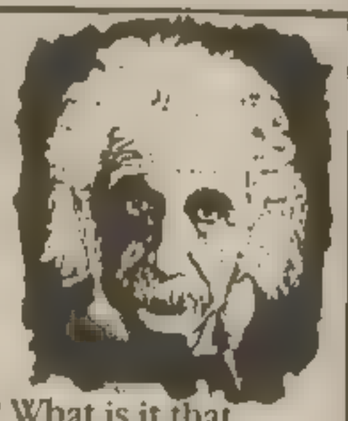

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DAVE from Ireland who's into music software. Jon from Cheltenham, lost your address. Please sent to Cheltenham, But friend interested TA. Pazza with an Amiga.

● ANNOUNCEMENTS

MESSAGE to Ronnie James: Please could you send me the Elcato Demo I ordered from you last month, or contact me as soon as possible. Ring Mark on (0247) 467728.

THIS is just a little note to say well done Blitz for the first brilliant budget Amiga game. Keep up the good work! From Timo.

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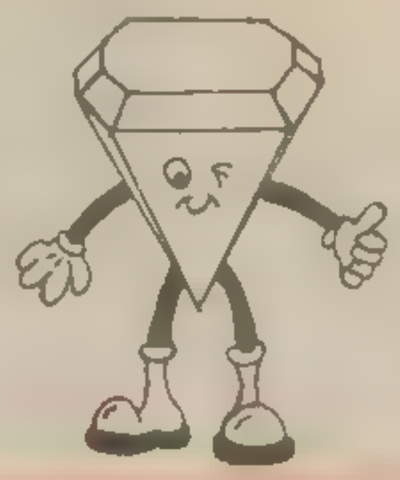

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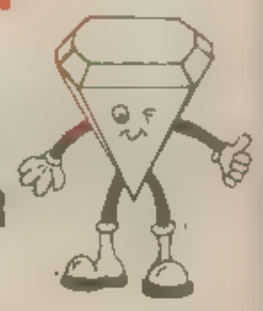

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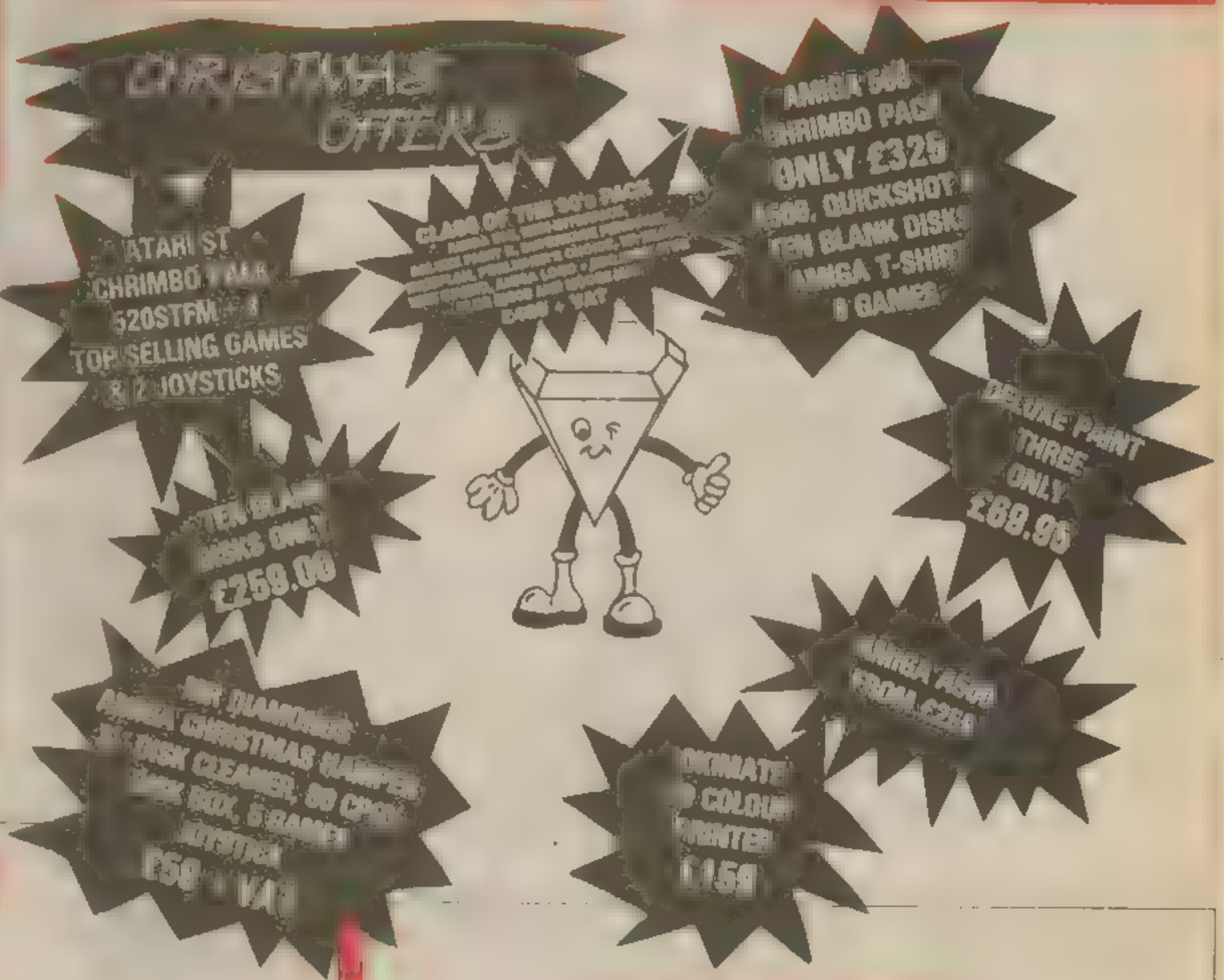

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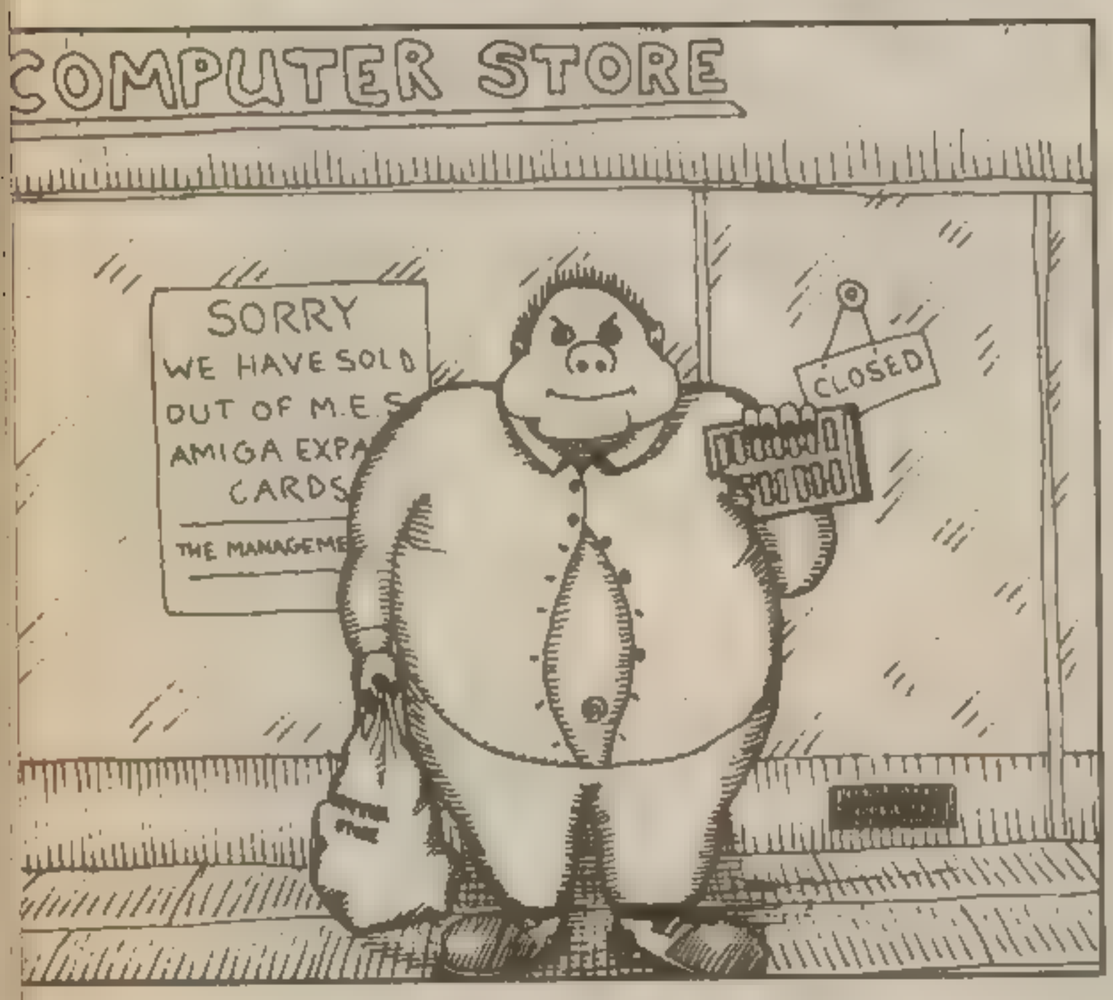

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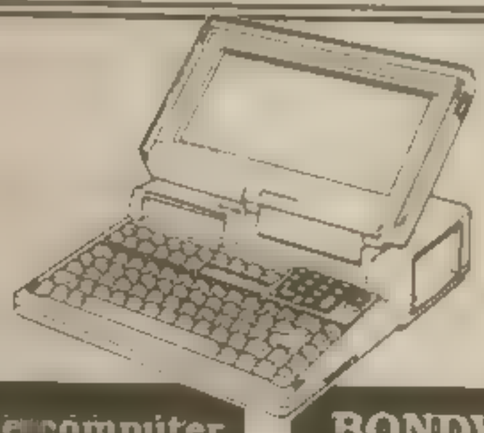

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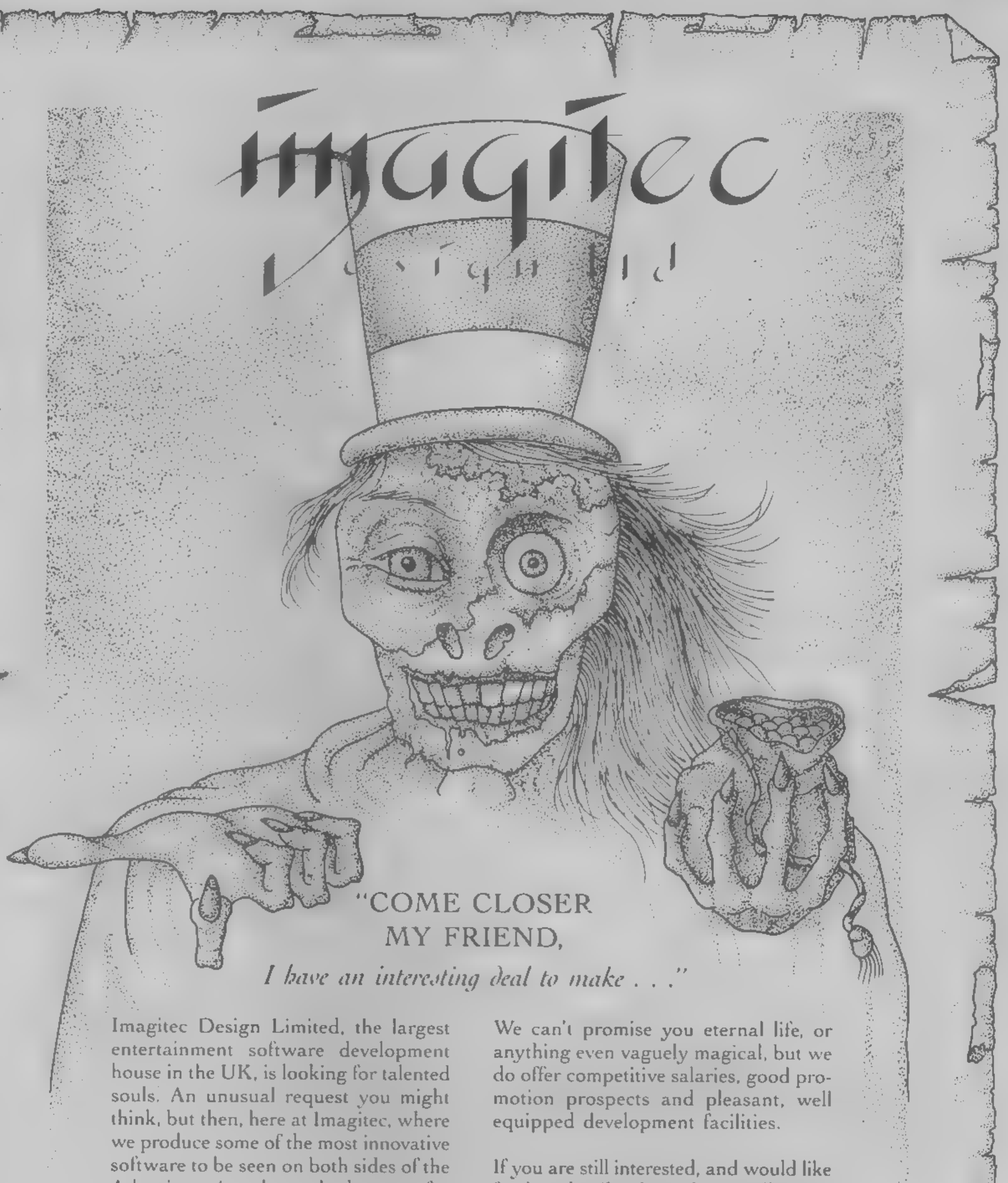

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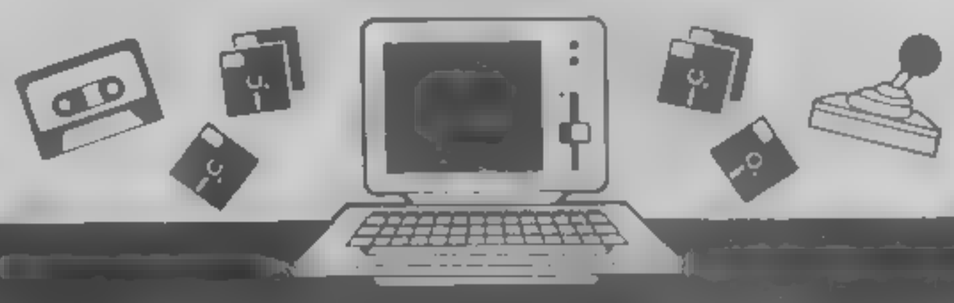

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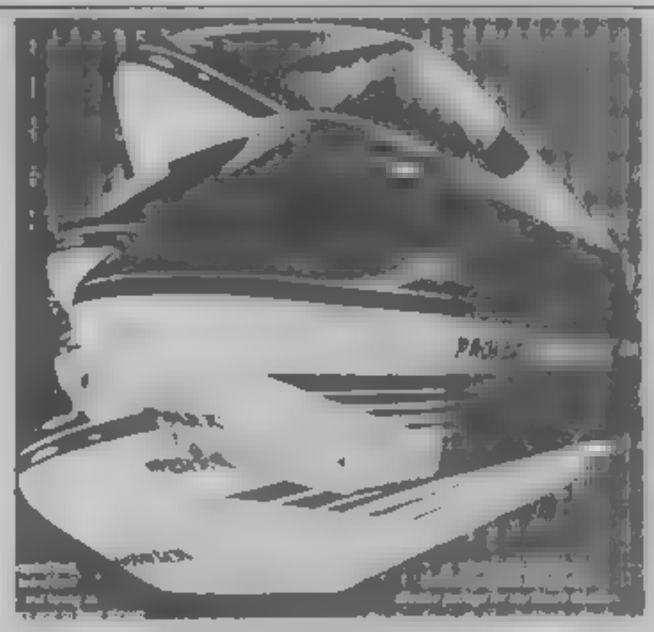

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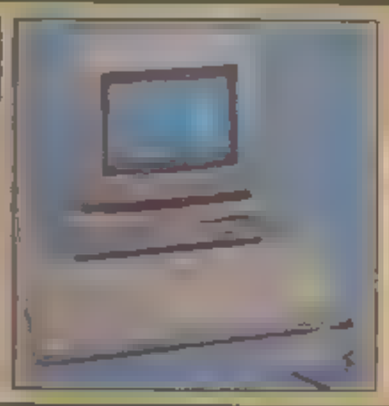

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Do you already own a computer
If so, which one do you own?

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TECH TIPS

Personal computer problems? Express's Agony column has the answer. Write in strictest confidence to Uncle Techtip. The best tips win a freebie – so don't forget to tell us your address and machine

HELP! Machine machinations

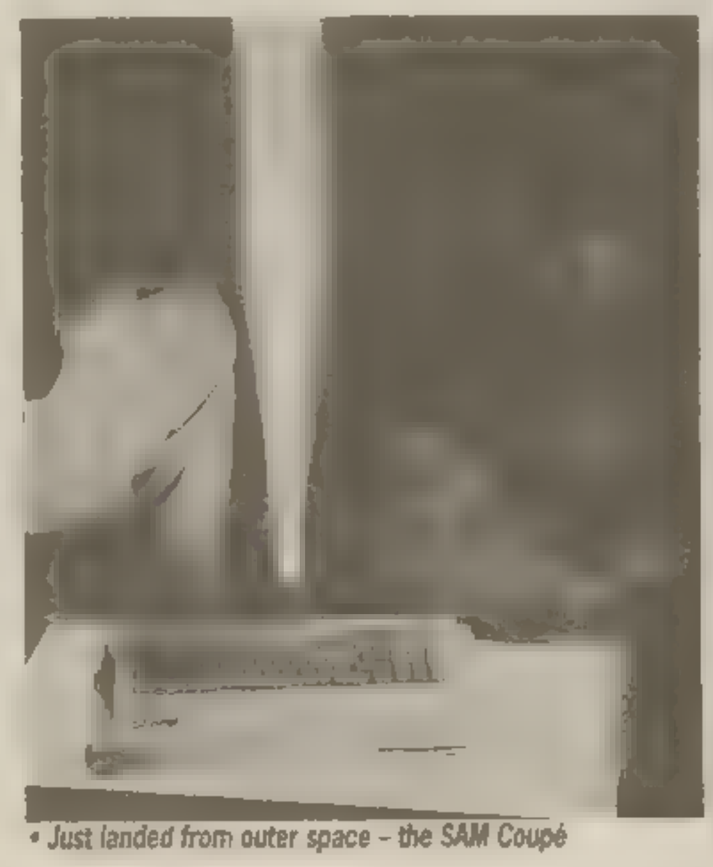
I have decided to upgrade from my Spectrum +2 and I have a small dilemma. Which computer now? I will be able to scrape together about £150 by Christmas which, with Christmas money from my parents *(Christmas money? Do your parents want to adopt another son? - Uncle Techtip)* will make about £250 and the choice seems to be be SAM Coupé or Atari ST. If I decide on the SAM Coupé, then I will be able to get the disk version. This seems ideal because I have just learned Z80 machine code which the SAM Coupé uses. I will be able to afford one by Christmas. I will be able to afford the software for it. It has better sound than the Atari ST. It has graphics which easily equal those of the ST. I can transfer all my files Spectrum files to it. I will have to wait ages to get an ST. The Coupé seems a much simpler computer to program etc.

On the other hand, the ST offers more modern technology. The chance to learn a new machine code language. Faster, smoother graphics. Software support (which the Coupé may not get). The chance for a part in the ST PD market (free, of course). The chance to get my hands on and experience the latest technology. Better games such as *Falcon, Populous* etc.

And of course there is the Commodore Amiga. Even better technology. Faster, smoother, better graphics. Even better sound. In fact the Amiga sounds like the best idea. All that mucking around with the Workbench and WIMP systems and HAM sounds lovely. It seems to have the best graphics of the three and the best hardware. Can I get a new Amiga for around £300? Can I get an ST for around £300 (without the usual bundle of games)? Please help, I just can't decide.

I use my Spectrum +2 for word processing, art, programming and the running the *Speccy Sector* and I'll want my new computer for the same kind of thing.
Owen Brown, Chelmsford, Essex.

Haven't you answered the question yourself (in no uncertain terms)? You want a computer and have X amount to spend. You don't want to wait to save up more money, but you would like a usable machine which has a reasonable quantity of software available, disk drives etc., and which is well specified. The Atari ST is certainly not the 'latest technology' and neither is the more sophisticated Amiga. So of the three, what's left? That's right the dear old SAM. The computer that's brand new yet based upon technology several years old. But it does the job, it can use Spectrum software, it's cheap and it's here now. Buy the SAM and enjoy it....



• Just landed from outer space – the SAM Coupé

HELP! Juki hi-jinks

I have just been given a printer and wonder if it is compatible with my Atari 520STFM. The printer is a Juki 6100. I have no cables or instructions with it so an address for the manufacturers would be a help too.
Mike Chappel, Clacton-on-sea, Essex.

The Juki 6100 is a letter quality daisywheel printer. That is, a printer that uses a printing mechanism shaped like the head of a daisy to produce quality text but no graphics. The device is supplied with a either serial or parallel interfaces in order to connect to a wide range of computers, and was extremely popular at the cheap end of the daisy wheel market two or three years ago. The Juki is completely compatible with your Atari ST, but to connect the two together you will need to obtain a suitable lead. Examine the rear of the printer for connector ports. If there is a D-shaped connector socket with just one large slot containing an upper and lower row of gold contacts, then the printer is parallel and you'll need to purchase a parallel Centronics cable (about £12 available from your local computer store or one of the many advertisers in Shopping Express). If, on the other hand, the connector is D-shaped but contains three rows of little 'holes' then the interface is serial and you'll need a serial cable (available see above).

I'm having extreme difficulty locating a telephone number for Juki. If anyone out there can help, call your favourite Uncle...

HELP! Doctor doctor

I am currently involved in studying for a PhD and am heavily involved in graphics programming on the Apollo work station. I am writing to you though on a more personal note *(sorry, but my heart already belongs to another – Uncle Techtip)*, in that I am about to spend between £600 and £1,000 on an Atari of some form and I wonder if you could clarify a number of my queries.

Firstly, I would obviously like to continue with quite high resolution graphics displays but would prefer them to be in colour. How do the Atari colour monitors compare to the monochrome device and also to the modulated TV image? Do the Mega STs have a TV modulation output?

I would also like to carry out the word processing and production of my thesis and articles so an LQ printer of some sort would also have to come out of my budget. I'd appreciate it if you could advise me on the best combination. My ideal system would comprise a Mega ST 1, high resolution colour monitor and a 24-pin dot matrix printer. Am I being too unrealistic?

When is the new Atari STE going to be available and what are your opinions of the enhanced graphics and audio on it?
Scott Strudwick, Plumstead, London.

The Atari colour monitor enjoys a fine reputation throughout the industry as being of high quality and fine construction. Like the monochrome monitor, the colour device has a super display, clear and steady. The monitor is also very reasonably priced. The resolution of the colour monitor is not as high as that of the mono monitor but is far superior to a modulated TV display. There's no colour ripple or shimmer effects, so it easy to use for quite long periods without too much eye strain.

The Mega STs do not have a TV modulator and consequently, must be used with a colour or mono monitor (not necessarily the Atari offerings). Silica Shop can provide Mega ST owners with an add-on TV modulator for a small price.

As for a printer, how about the Citizen Swift 24, a 24 pin, 192 characters per second printer that can accept fan fold or single sheet paper, is cheap (£389) and readily available. Contact Citizen on 01 388 9871.

The STE will be generally available within the next couple of months. Although the machine has wonderful new graphic and sound capabilities there appears to be much doubt amongst the leading programmers as to whether these attributes will made use of. A distinct air of 'too little too late' pervades the STE atmosphere.

HELP! Flip side

It was very nice to hear that J. Lord (Express 49) was impressed by Evesham Micros but there is another side to the coin.

I bought a 520STFM from Evesham just over a year ago. All was well until about three months ago when the drive started playing up. I returned the machine to them and duly received it back about a week later. The drive was little better and within a week was as bad as before. In addition, the casing was incorrectly fitted together, one of the keys was adrift in the packaging and there were greasy finger prints all over the computer!

As the drive deteriorated again I wrote to Evesham outlining the problem. I received expressions of surprise and a letter published in another magazine saying how wonderful they were. They also said my letter had been passed on to their Birmingham workshops for response. They never bothered to reply and now the guarantee period

is over. I am left with the cost of a repair or fitting a replacement drive. Maybe you could advise if the drive is repairable or needs replacement.

After a period of drive accessing, the drive starts to make a horrible grating noise and the 'drive is not responding' message appears. Sometimes I can retry, sometimes I have to switch off and wait for half an hour or more. Should I risk a £25 repair or buy a new drive for £70. It is already a double sided drive so there is no incentive there.
P. Banes, Derby

I suggest you send the machine along to one of the reputable repair centres advertising in Shopping Express. They will be able to examine the drive and repair it if necessary (sounds to me as if the stepper motor might need a service). Don't go to the expensive of buying a new drive just yet. If the device isn't repairable - and there's every chance that it is - you'll be able to have a drive fitted by the inspecting repair centre, thereby ensuring correct fitting etc. I must say though that I'm surprised by your story. This is the first complaint of this kind I've seen about Evesham Micros, a normally reputable firm.

HELP! Cat walk

I have an Atari ST Mega 4 and use it with *Cyber Paint* and *Stereo CAD*. I can take the cat for a very long walk around the garden while *Stereo CAD* is doing its sums for a complex drawing. Here is the $50,000 question: would a hard disk speed things up?
Ron Wood, Truro, Cornwall.

Unlikely, I'm afraid Ron. As you so rightly state in your letter, the lengthy time needed by *Stereo CAD* is due to the complex graphical calculations performed by the program rather, than slow floppy disk accesses. If money is no object, throw a few hundred in the direction of one of the many hard disk drives available nowadays for the ST. It won't speed up the actual calculations performed by programs such as *Stereo CAD*, but will make loading of that and other software packages as well as your creations a whole lot faster, simpler and more elegant. However, if you're current place of habitation has the word 'garret' as part of its description then stick to floppies. Sure, it takes a little longer to load software, but what the hell, at least the cat's having a good time...

HELP! Film '89

I recently uncovered my two *Movie Maker* ROMs for the dear Acorn BBC B machine and decided to try and reinstate *Movie Maker*, but I found that the second of the two ROMs refused to work and wouldn't show up in the list of ROMs inside the computer. After trying to contact Slippery Slug, the company responsible for the package, I found that they have either gone into liquidation or are now under a different name.

Is there anyway I can get hold of a replacement or are there any *Express* readers who could give me one (it's ROM B, the green one)? I could also do with a copy of the manual though I think I might be able to remember how to use it...
Robin Morris, 107 Station Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B73 5LA.

There isn't a trace of Slippery Slug (!) so unless some alert Techtipper knows of a company name change, I'm afraid you'll have to throw yourself upon the mercy of the readers of this esteemed column and hope that one of them can supply you with a B ROM. The Techtippers are a very kind lot, and I'm sure that very soon someone will contact you very soon.

HELP! PPC display

Is it possible to fit an EGA or VGA card (either internally or externally) to the Amstrad PPC computer?

I would like to buy an EGA or VGA monitor in order to obtain a really good display as I believe the standard CGA type is not up to much.
Harry Thompson, Aberfoyle.

The Amstrad PPC portable computer is supplied with MDA and CGA as standard which is adequate for word processing and games playing but not very good if your want to use CAD packages, paint and graphics applications. Unfortunately, the PPC provides no ports for standard IBM add-on cards. There are however expansion boxes available which equip the machine with two or three 'slots' but they cost a relatively large amount (£150 or so). Using an expansion box, you can connect any kind of adapter card including display cards to allow you to drive high resolution monitors (both EGA and VGA).

If money is to you but a stepping stone to expensive gadgets and toys then contact Stratum Technology LTD (0734 441236) who can supply you with a single slot expansion box for £99 + VAT or a twin slot expansion box for £225 + VAT. Both boxes will allow you to connect display adapter cards.

The cards themselves will cost you around £75 or £80 for EGA and anything up to £200 for VGA. The best course of action is to shop around, examine the classified ads in this and other magazines (particularly our sister magazine *PC Plus*) to find the best deal.

HELP! CPC keys

I have an Amstrad CPC464 which a friend said I could have a problem with. The problem is I need to purchase a manual for it and a space bar button and a delete button, but everywhere I go or ring nobody seems to do the parts, I would be most grateful if you could give me some information as to where I could these objects.
Robert Hart, Roehampton.

The Amstrad CPC was, nay is, an incredibly popular machine and there are a lot of spares suppliers, but you have to dig deep to find them.

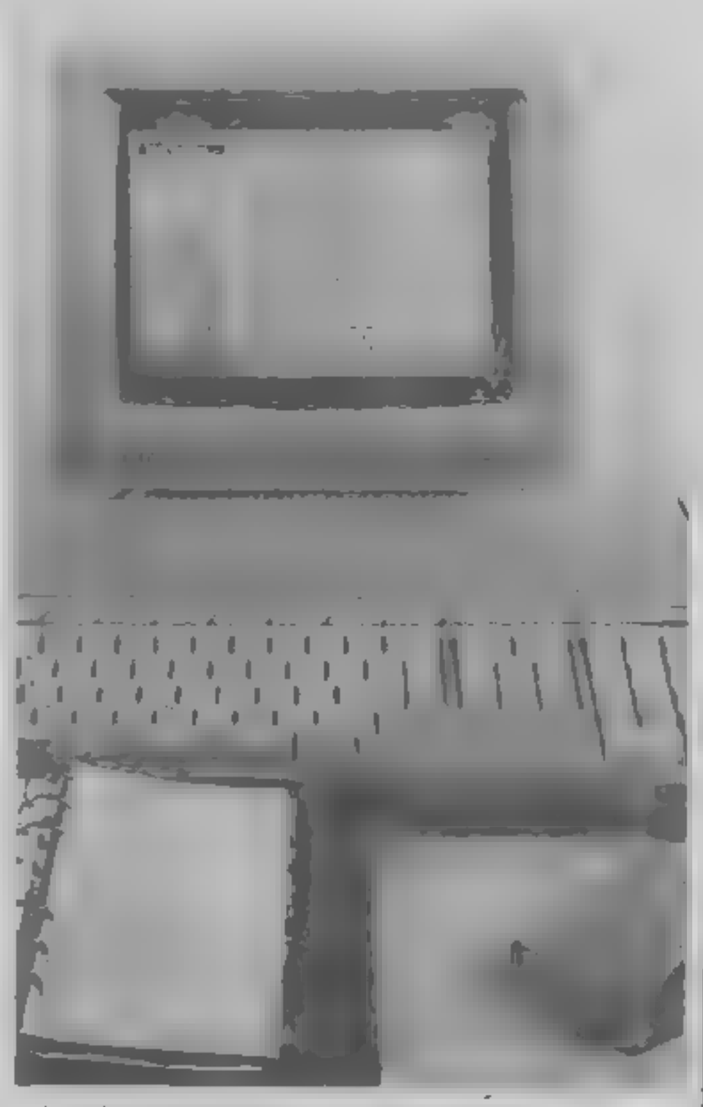
Unfortunately, all those questioned said that it wasn't possible to supply individual keys. The only way to repair the keyboard is to buy a new unit costing £50. Apparently, this situation is due to Amstrad refusing to provide individual spares. Perhaps some kind techtipper will have an Amstrad CPC which is broken and they will send you the keys.

As for a manual for the machine I'm afraid the same situation applies. No-one is willing to sell one. Again maybe a true-blue techtipper wil come through.●

HELP! ST multitudes

1. As I was flicking through the Silica Shop catalogue I found in the monitors section a description of the Atari SM194 19-inch high resolution mono monitor. Could you tell me what features this monitor has which makes it so expensive. Also why can it only be used with the Mega STs?
2. How much does *NeoDesk* cost and where can I get it from?
3. Is the Multiface ST compatible with the new Atari STE or TT (or Stacy)?
4. When is the change-the-ST-into-a-fax-machine cartridge Tefax coming out?
5. Could I use hi-density (1.44Mb) 3.5 inch floppies on my Atari ST?
6. Could you recommend a good 68000 machine code book for me to learn assembly language programming with?
7. Is HiSoft's *Twist* program any good?
8. Have you tried plugging in a four player adapter into the STE's printer port for eight-player simultaneous play?
9. What's a WORM drive?
10. Has your Atari's Megafile 44 SyQuest cartridge crashed yet?
11. Where can I get *MonST* from?
12. Have you reviewed the Naksha 3-in-1 mouse?
13. Is *PageStream* DTP better than *Calamus Professional*?
14. Where did Future Publishing get their 4160 STE? (I know they asked us not to ask but I'll ask anyway).
G. Chan, Greater London.

1. You read the description right? What did you notice about this display that makes it different from the ordinary monochrome ST display? Could it be a little matter of seven inches? A 190-inch monitor costs a whole lot more than a standard 12-inch device, supports a much higher resolution and is supported only by the Mega STs. Smaller sales (there being far fewer Megas than standard STs around) mean a larger price in order to justify production and selling.
2. *NeoDesk* costs around £29.95 and is available from Electric. Call them on 0480 496666.
3. The Multiface should be fully compatible with the STE although I haven't tried it. The proof of the pudding etc., but you can be sure that if it isn't compatible, Romantic Robot will be quick to exploit this new gap in the market.
4. The device is here now. It's called the Microtext teletext adapter and is available from Microtext (call the company on 0705 595694) priced at £148.93. The fax adapter has a comprehensive range of features, but for a complete description of its abilities read the review in issue 5 of our sister magazine *ST Format*, on sale soon.
5. Yes, but you wouldn't be able to guarantee data integrity. Ordinary 3.5 inch drives find it very difficult to distinguish tracks on high density floppies. Save your money and buy standard 3.5 inch floppies from a reputable manufacturer. That way, you can be sure the program your recorded yesterday will still be there today.
6. Yes. Locate a copy of the Abacus 68000 Machine Language book priced at £12 and available from any high street book store.
7. Very good, but only if you have more than half a meg of RAM. Although *Twist* will work quite happily with 520STs, they're severely limited in the amount of programs which can be held in memory.
8. No.
9. WORM stands for Write Once Read Many. The drive can, as its name suggests, be written to only once - it can't be erased and written to again using normal methods - but once data is stored, it can be retrieved lots of times at high speed. WORM drives are used with PCs running enormous data bases and text retrieval systems in electronic libraries.
10. Constantly. The Megafile does seem to be extremely sensitive, although after crashing, I've always managed to bring it up again without problems.
11. Check HiSoft's advertisement on page 20.
12. No.
13. No. *PageStream* is a comprehensive DTP application at a competitive price but it just doesn't have the range of professional features built in to *Calamus*. Text rotation, complex layout facilities, and soon colour separation make Calamus simply the best DTP solution you can by for the ST.
14. We told you not to ask...



• A plethora of Atari ST queries answered above

LOOK TO THE S

Astronomy is too much effort for those of us who to prefer to be asleep and warm in the freezing autumnal nights. So Stuart Anderton let his computer take him on a guided tour of the solar system without ever leaving the house

THE TOP TEN PLANETS

1. MERCURY • Alternately searingly hot and monkey-scaringly cold, the innermost planet has a year of only 88 days

2. VENUS • The greenhouse effect gone mad has created a planet with a temperature of 500C and acid rain thet would dissolve metal

3. EARTH • The place where the action is

4. MARS • A dry, cold planet which nevertheless is the most hospitible to humans and offers the best chance of extraterrestial life

5. JUPITER • The largest of the planets, some 318 times the mass of Earth, it spins on its axis in only 10 hours. This feirce motion whips up the hurricane that is the Great Red Spot

6. SATURN • Its incredible rings make this gas giant the most memorable of the planets

7. URANUS • Named after the grandfather of Zeus, Uranus personified the sky to the ancients. It is the most tedious of the planets

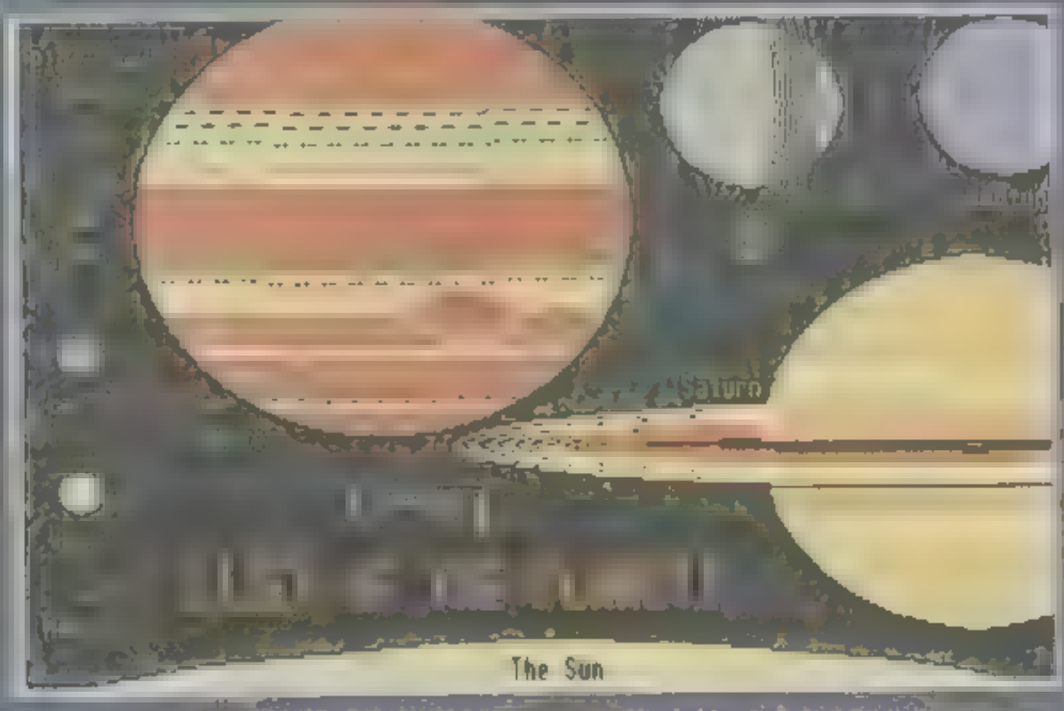
8. NEPTUNE • The staggering pictures of ice-blue Neptune are still fresh in our minds from the Voyager II mission

9. PLUTO • Erratic in orbit, Pluto and its partner Charon are unique in their lobsided spin around the Sun

10. PLANET X • Long predicted by gravitational perturbations of Neptune's orbit, Planet X stubbornly refuses to be discovered

The opening menu screen of The Computer Guide to the Solar System. The locked your mouse pointer and the program uses pull-down menus to select which of the various sections you want to view. The Guide is mouse controlled throughout and finding your way around couldn't be easier. The program runs in medium resolution which limits colour somewhat but allows more accurate scaled drawings.

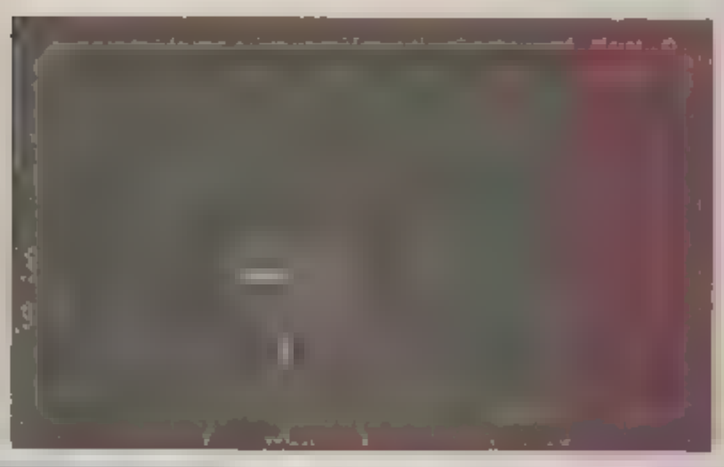
As well as explaining the regular members of the Solar System the Guide describes visitors such as comets. The animated textbook approach which the program takes throughout was suited to the discrete nature of the subject and a real solar system down into its constituent planets, and the planets were further broken down into orbit, size, structure and so forth.

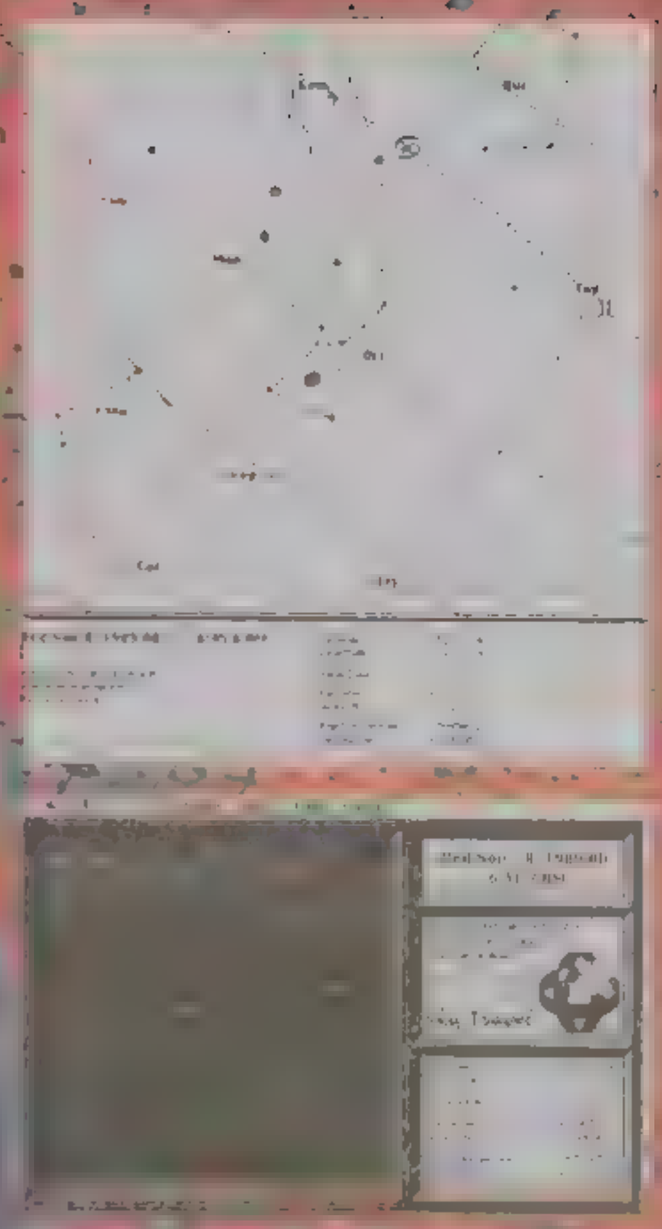


Carefully drawn scale diagrams are a feature of The Computer Guide to the Solar System. This screen indicates the massive differences in scale between the members of the solar system, from gas giants Jupiter and Saturn through Earth, Mars and Venus to rocky cosmic dwarves Mercury and Pluto. The edge of the Sun at the bottom of the picture puts the proportions in proper context.

STARS

• Keeping tabs on the stars need not cost the earth. The screen shots below were taken from the ST public domain program Planetarium. The map ■ the far left allows you to set your location, and then the constellations can be viewed (centre). Information on each and every star shown is included. The programmers even had a sense of humour – if you look straight down you see a pair of feet! (right). Similar programs are available for the Amiga and PC

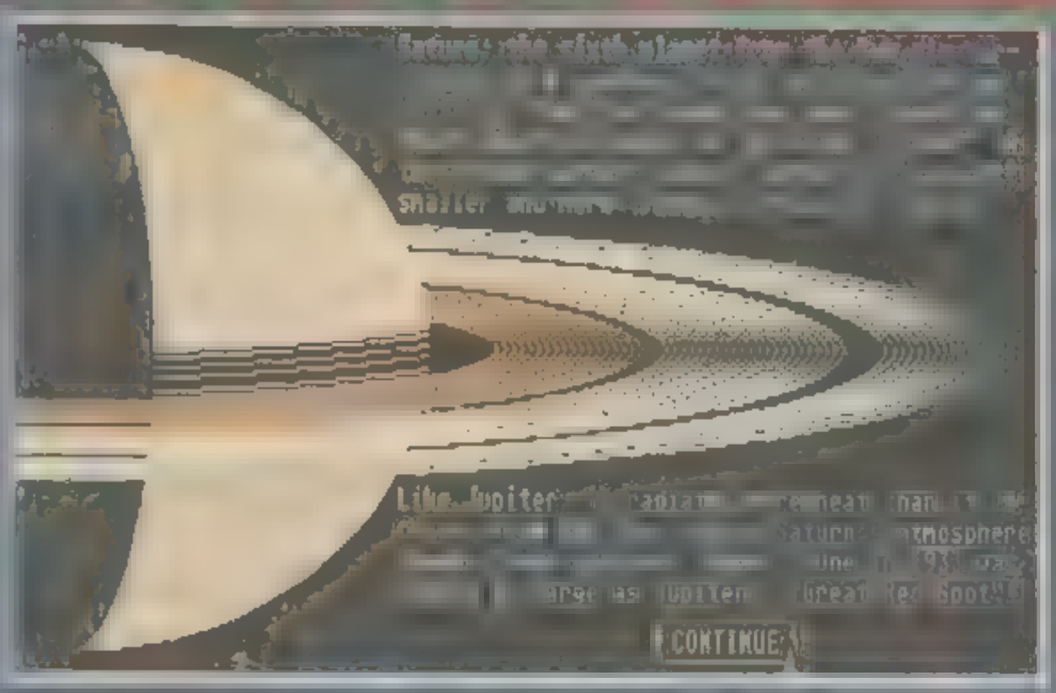




• Working out which star is where is a tedious, mathematical process, but the rules which govern it are simple enough. The show in the sky depends on the rotation of the earth, the season of the year, which year it is and the position on the planet you are viewing from. A computer is well suited to this task, and SkyTravel from Microillusions is one of several which do the job.

Sky Travel, which is available on the Mac, Apple II and Commodore 64 (strange combination!) takes a matter of seconds to show you the arrangement of the stars at the present time, but it can also be set to view the sky at any time in the past from anywhere on the planet. This enables you to recreate the scene at important historical events – Halley's comet at the battle of Hastings for example or the conjuction of Venus, Jupiter and Saturn in 7bc which is often attributed as being the star of Bethlehem.

As well as showing you the stars on screen (left), Sky Travel can print out full star maps (above left) which those without portables can take outside. The program costs £19.95 on the C64, £29.95 on the Apple II and £39.95 on the Mac. Contact Microillusions Europe on 0480 496497.



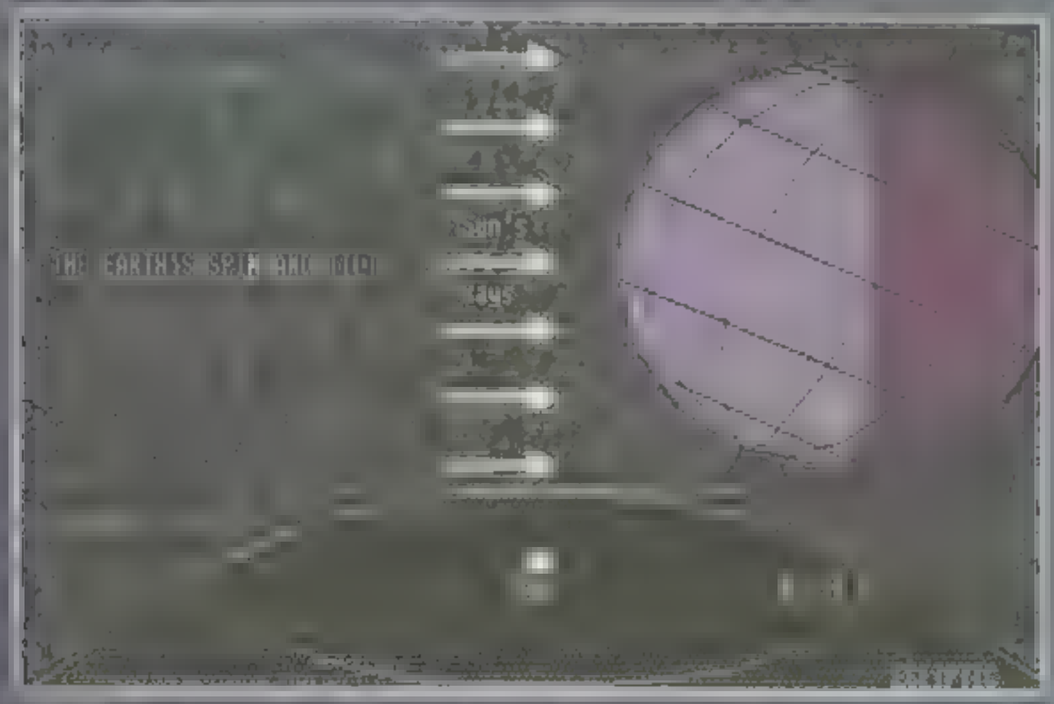
PUBLIC VIEWING

You can explore the sky on the cheap with public domain astronomy programs.

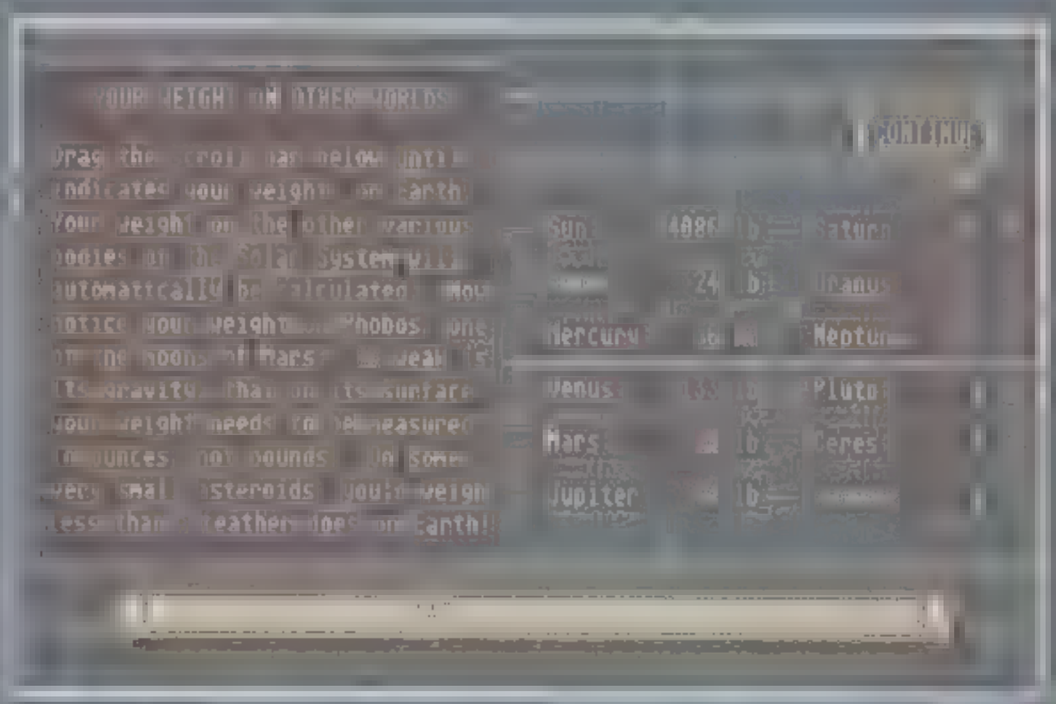
The ST has well-... *Planetarium* above. ... star Charmans *SkyMap* ... available ... £2.50 from Goodman PD ... 0782 ... 3565. *Orbit* is a rather complex ... program which lets you track satellites ... they hurtle around the globe. *StarCharm*, another ... program, ... includes the entire Messier catalogue on the ... *SkyMap* ... mono-only ... charm ... program.

Amiga astronomers can find the planets with *StarCharm* from Seven Seas Software. It enables you to track the constellations and planets as they sail around the sky. *StarCharm* ... Seven Seas ... 223 ... and costs £2.50.

FlightSky ... program for PC-compatibles ... provides ... detailed map of the cosmos ... most display configurations. *FlightSky* ... £ ... from Advantage Software on 0247 ... 224340.



• Being able to animate the diagrams is where a computer based astronomical guide comes into its own. The example above shows a spinning globe basking in the sunshine. Shows how the earth's axial tilt causes the seasons as the planet slowly tears around the Sun. This is something much clearer on screen than it ever could be in an unmoving two-dimensional textbook.



The Guide has ... interactive features ... above illustrates how ... differing gravities ... various planetary bodies influence ... weight ... weighing ... Earth ... the scroll bar ... bottom and ... weights ... planets ... indicated above. The ... reviewer would weigh 086lb ... on Mars ... Phobos ... ounces ... the ... prefer to stick to ... Earthbound weight.

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PC UPDATE

4DOS foray

Sometimes, it has to be said, I run short of things to write about in this column. It was therefore with a sharp intake of relief that I received the latest Shareware Marketing catalogue supplement. There is nearly always good stuff in Steve Lee's little tomes, and such is the case this time. A review of *4DOS* finally persuaded me to try the program. The review was Steve's own so I should have expected a certain degree of hype, but as he was kind enough to send me a copy, I forsook *TopDOS* and launched into *4DOS* to see if it was up to much or not.

Both products aim to adapt DOS and add to its functions to make the operating system easier to live with. *TopDOS* achieves this adaption by loading a TSR module which sits in memory and provides an editor and Xtree style file manager. *4DOS* has less in the way of built-in applications, but replaces the COMMAND.COM file on your disk instead. This in effect releases up to 35K of memory for applications. The kernel of *4DOS* sits in memory, providing some functions itself and paging others in when you call for them. It will do this from a hard disk, a RAM disk or EMS memory, depending on how it's installed.

• Available screen space is limited

Installation is not quite as easy as the installation program would have you believe, but once complete *4DOS* boots up when you start your PC and all the new features are available from the DOS prompt. There is DOS command line editing, a text file lister, a heap of new utilities and many extensions to existing ones. It's comforting to have *4DOS* show back its action on a command. Typing DEL FRED.TXT, for example, prompts the response 'Deleting FRED.TXT' while the file is being deleted.

One of the mainstream improvements of *4DOS* is the facility to assign a group of commands, even the equivalent of a batch file, to a given command. This feature, which *TopDOS* also provides, gives you the chance to tailor the environment to your own whims and wishes. A registered copy of *4DOS* will cost you $35 at the current dollar/pound conversion. Evaluation copies cost £7.99. Shareware Marketing on 0297 24088.

Shareware news

Other goodies in the same catalogue supplement include a lot of clip-art and fonts for well-known art packages like *First Publisher*, *PC Paintbrush* and *Printmaster*. There are also some interesting LaserJet fonts which come a lot cheaper than equivalent commercial products. The catalogue is full of goodies: how about the complete King James Bible on-line with fast word and phrase search? Or two new disks of three-part piano music? Or a complete CAD package to rival the likes of *AutoCAD* and *Generic CAD*? Or maybe, if nothing else, a disk full of arcade games? Same telephone number as before and most disks cost £7.99, before registration.

Mice with no balls

PC mice have revolutionised the use of many application programs and have made some possible that could not have been written for keyboard control alone. They do have one major disadvantage, though: you need to have a flat surface on which to run them. That surface also needs to be clean.

This is a distinct problem when using a portable machine. If you can find a space to roll your mouse's ball, ten to one it'll be a table top in a train or plane, and that can be anything but dust-free. Now a British company, Culton Sales and Services, has released a product which could take the place of the mouse on portable PCs, and has no moving parts. The finger-position sensor is a small sealed pad which converts the position of a finger placed on it into an equivalent coordinate on a PC's screen. As you move your finger, so the pointer moves. Press harder on the pad and the application responds as if you had clicked a mouse button.

This type of pad has been used on the new Psion Mobile computer, though it's not clear whether it's the Culton device doing the work on this machine. Culton do say they expect to have their pad available on portable machines within the next three months, though.

I was talking with a confirmed GEM enthusiast the other day (we were both knocking the printing speed of Windows) and he came up with what he thought was a bug in his implementation of the environment. Running *GEM Paint* on a VGA monitor, he could only ever see a quarter of a page. This, in fact, seems quite normal for *GEM Paint*. When used with an EGA or VGA screen, the available painting area is reduced to less than screen height. This must presumably be a memory restriction, but it's odd that *PC Paintbrush*, *DR Halo* et al can still give more than a screen's worth on a 640K PC: most, most odd.

Scanner upgrade

Mitsubishi is the world's largest manufacturing company, and it makes everything from ships to escalators, planes to computer scanners. I haven't seen any good press releases in regards the company's ship building ventures lately, but it just floated a new version of its handheld/desktop scanner. The handheld/desktop phrasing is very deliberate as the scanner is like a thick eight-inch stick which you can pass over an A4 sheet by hand, or fit into a powered cradle if you prefer. You can then feed paper through the scanner fax-like.

The new version uses a yellow-green LED which improves scanning of the colour red, and includes Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software tuned to Courier, Times and Helvetica fonts. It can also be taught to read new fonts.

The £599 plus VAT package includes the scanner, the expansion card and the software, but the powered cradle is extra. If you have an AT with 640K or more, you might like to give Mitsubishi a ring for more details: Mitsubishi can be reached by phoning 0707 276100.

Simon Williams

PCW PATCH

Bridge passage

And the answer to last week's Bridge Problem is: across the Humber Estuary with a main span of 1400 metres.

Well, the old ones are the best, I reckon. Actually I know nothing about bridge. But I can tell devotees of the game who have not gleaned already that CP software has brought out a new game for the PCW called Bridge Player 2150 Galactica, fortunately with the non-astronomical price of £29.95.

Nicola Gardner, winner of two world championships, co-wrote it, and it comes with 100 tutor hands, cheat facilities (such as infinite shins) and post mortem functions.

As I don't play the game, I cannot do it justice by way of review, but CP have an excellent track record (in backgammon and chess games, for example) and this should be a very good program. CP is on 099382 3463.

Clear cut case

Remember the Great Disk Debate last year? Amstrad stopped selling those clear plastic cases with its disks and the world went into uproar. Outraged customers insisted that disk cases were necessary and threatened to call in the National Council for Civil Liberties.

Now SBS are supplying disks with cases again instead of the paper sleeves. Ten CF2s cost £19.96 plus P&P. Details: 0273 423523.

For what it's worth, I think cases are, as someone in Blackadder might say, as useful as something very useless used by someone who doesn't need to use it anyway.

Latest gossip

I normally don't listen to what A Little Bird Told Me This Morning, as it's usually along the lines of 'hey, boys, I've just found a worm' at six in the morning. Whispers from Locomotive, however, tell me that 'an interesting new product' will be coming out from LocoScript very soon (i.e. a month or so).

LocoSpread? A *LocoFax* organiser? *LocoRam*, a plug-in memory expansion? All will be revealed before you can say Ja...

Tipping prohibited

If you've ever been dumped into CP/M by a BASIC program that has ill-manneredly left the screen window a funny size, you can restore it to its normal full size by pressing [EXIT] then 0. This also cancels out the effect of pressing [EXIT] then X in CP/M which makes the screen one line deep – a great way to annoy your CP/M using friends.

Techical writer still wanted

Yes folks, the PCW magazine *8000 Plus* is stil looking for a Technical Writer. Do you, or any the members of your family, any of your friends or enemies fit the bill? They're after someone with a sound knowledge of *LocoScript* (yes, even things like Layouts and Printer drivers) and CP/M programs like *Protext, Masterfile, Mini Office* etc. Above average (i.e. almost liveable) salary. Details right now, without delay from Sharon Bradley on 0225 446034.

Basil Pigg

ANTICS Roadshow

Taking a peek

I promised to supply you with a little program that would allow you to examine in ASCII format, the contents of the Atari eight-bit's ROM and RAM memory, and to explore various interesting locations. Now, for those who have waited patiently, it is here.

```
GRAPHICS 0:DIM H$(1),K$(1):? "Enter start address": INPUT A:? "How many
locations to examine": INPUT Z:Z=(Z/8)
20 FOR C=0 TO Z:? :? A;" ";:F A=A TO A+7:P=PEEK(A):H$=
CHR$(P):IF ASC(H$)<32 OR ASC(H$)>125 THEN H$="."
? " ";H$;:NEXT A:NEXT C:IF C>Z THEN ? :? "Press S to stop, C to change
specs, RETURN to continue":INPUT K$
40 IF K$<>"S" AND K$<>"C" THEN GOTO 20:IF K$="S" THEN END
50 RUN
```

• The awaited program with which to delve into Atari Eight-bit innards

This program will allow you to delve inside the Atari's memory, discovering the secrets of the ROM. To use the program simply run it from BASIC. When prompted, type in a start address for the examination then follow the prompts.

If you find that your interest in the innerworkings of the XL/XE's memory becomes strong then I would advise you to invest in a copy of *Mapping The Atari* published by Compute! and available from Page 6, PO BOX 54, Stafford. Price should be around £17. The book contains a full memory map for the eight-bit machine with complete descriptions of almost every location and lots of example and utility programs. An excellent reference work, one which no Atari eight-bit user should be without.

Publishing on the desktop

The Atari ST, Commodore Amiga and Apple Macintosh are all used for DTP, and now you too can get in on the act. There are two DTP applications which have recently become available for our favourite machine. The first is *Page Marshal* and the second *News Station*. Both allow documents to be created using a variety of fonts, text boxes, and both provide facilities for the import of graphics.

Spare a thought

Do you have trouble locating spares for your computer? I have trouble just locating ordinary software for mine so trying to dig up obscure chip sets, keyboard parts etc., can be a real pain in the neck. Now Derek Fern (021 353 5730) has launched a spares service that can provide you with everything from replacement keyoards to motors for the 1050 disk drive new buttons for the various cassette drives. Derek also sells 800XLs for the incredible price of £25, so phone already!

Edmund Blake

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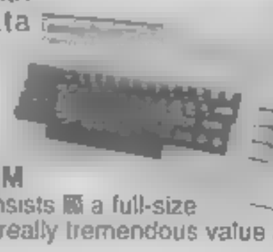

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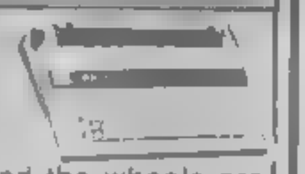

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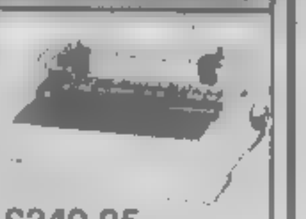

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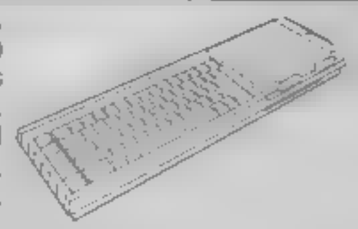

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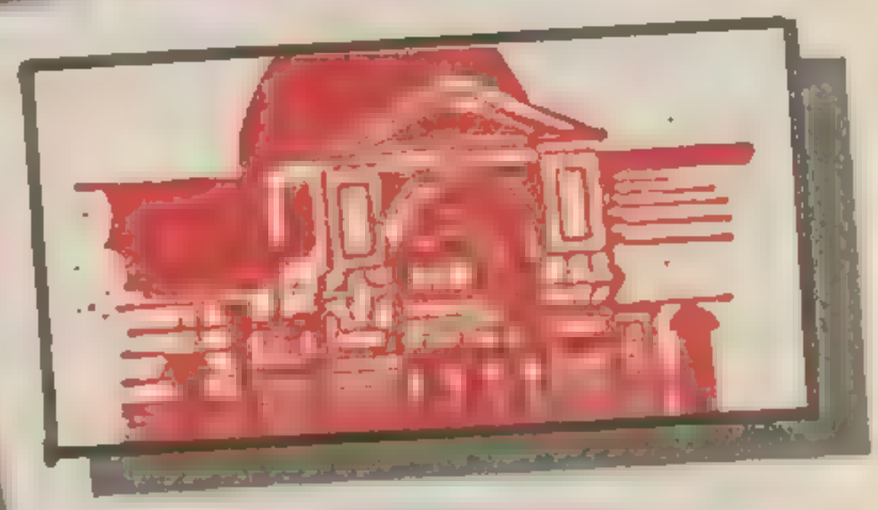

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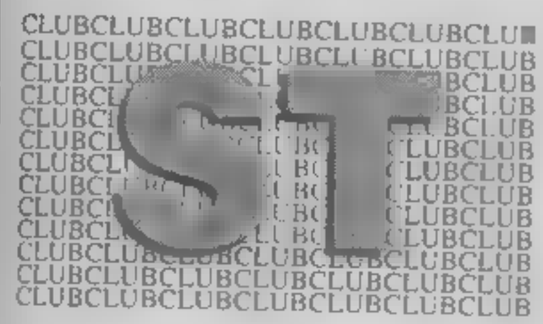


Picture this

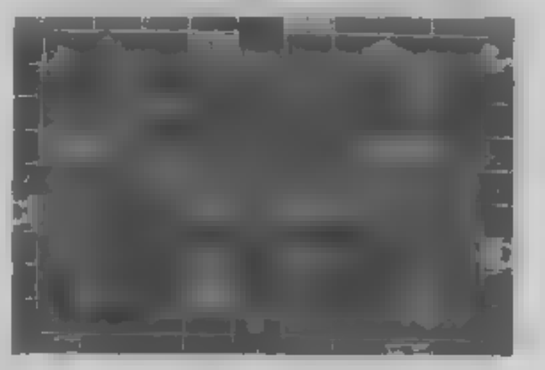
Domark, publishers of the *Star Wars* trilogy, *Trivial Pursuit* and Tengen arcade conversions such as *Vindicators*, *APB Xybots* and *Dragon Spirit*, has very successfully combined two kinds of game. On the one hand there's the "fast" titles, which usually are fast and frantic shoot-'em-ups, driving or alien-type games: the kind of thing that makes a great impact, sells by the bucket load and then turns up within a year or 18 months on a compilation.

Then on the other hand there's the "slow burners", of which the aforementioned *Trivial Pursuit* and entertainments such as *Bob's Full House* are prime examples. These may not send the country's teenagers into a buying frenzy, but make a steady and dependable nice little earner.

The latest of these latter less fashionable but still crucial games in the Domark portfolio is *Pictionary*, a licence of the huge-selling American charades-on-paper boardgame. Like *Trivial Pursuit* it's a shockingly simple idea that leaves you wondering why on earth you didn't think of it first. That honour goes to Rob Angel, a charming gentleman who travelled over from Seattle to meet Domark and a select group of the country's top computer journalists. Oh, and I was there too.

Pictionary has been done well on the ST: it's smooth, easy to follow and in the right circumstances could be as much fun as the boardgame original. The problems it faces are twofold. First of all it's practically impossible, or so I've found, to draw anything remotely recognisable on screen – though the computer stores hundreds of pictures, so that's not such a problem.

The other difficulty is that it's a game that's going to be bought for rather than by its users: grandparents, parents and girlfriends will be choosing what they recognise rather than "one of them car games." If you're a recipients of *Pictionary* in the next few weeks – perhaps on Christmas morning, who knows? – try to resist the temptation to hurl it at the nearest relative. Give it time, and try to get a few friends to play it with you – for money, if there's no other way! I'd like to bet you'll soon change your mind on whether it's worth the dosh. (Especially since the dosh was probably someone else's to purchase *Pictionary*, and should be someone else's if you're playing for money.)



• Pictionary: *play for money if you have to*

CD-ST link ruled out

It's odd that the five year old eight-bit Amstrad CPC, of all machines, should suddenly prove to be at the cutting edge of technology. Yet the story is last week's *NCE* that budget brigade Code Masters are to release a 30 game compilation on compact disc for the dear old (and I do mean dear – and old) CPC is startling news indeed.

The sweetest thing of all is the price: the Code Masters 30 game compilation, including a connecting lead, is a mere £20. Just imagine if ST games were available in compilations at a mere fraction of their current price. This is an incredibly, indubitably mouth-watering prospect!

Unfortunately, however, it's not going to happen in a very long time – if at all. Code Masters appear to have a 4Mb limit with their CDs, and while that might work well with eight-bit titles, it doesn't go very far on 16-bit! Furthermore the loading wouldn't be much faster than it is already.

In the meantime we'll have to make do with an ST version of the eight-bit smash *Treasure Island Dizzy*, Code Masters' first £4.99 title. It's not a bad game at all on the CPC, though whether its owners are going to go a bundle on converted eight-bit games is not easy to predict.

Atari new games assault

It's too early to say whether Atari's new attempt to make a name for itself in the games market will succeed. Who can forget the immortal *Tempest*, the unforgettable *Enterprise*, the everlasting *Starbreaker*? Well, fortunately for ARC, Atari's new pseudonym, almost everyone did. It would be good for everyone concerned if next year's titles make a more lasting impression. We shall see if this is in the cards.

Really tacky stunt of the week

Paradise Computers – the arbiter of good taste, as always – is including a free condom with every order for public domain software over £4. But since it's also donating 50p to the Spastics Society for every one of its new PD "starter packs," I suppose we cannot be too critical – the work being, after all, in the name of charity.

Steve Carey

NEW ST ADD-ONS

If you desire it's now possible to do your entire secondary education maths course on the ST.

The producer of some of the best ST educational software, CL, has announced a complete GCSE course, claimed to be the first of its kind. Micro Maths... is a 24 program, two book package intended as a sequel to the Primary Maths course. It takes users from secondary school entrance level right up to GCSE.

And a step-by-step A-level course, Mega Maths, is expected soon.

Micro Maths is £24. To discuss how many beans make four with CL on 0491 57934.

ProScore Delayed

Those of you patiently waiting for the appearance of Comus' *ProScore* MIDI sequencing and notation package will be sad to hear that the future of the Amiga version is in doubt.

According to the UK distributors, Comus in France has encountered problems with the high-resolution display on the Amiga, and therefore the release has been held up indefinately.

Reports have been circulating concerning the Amiga version of Steinberg's *Pro-24* MIDI sequencer system, Amiga 2400. According to these reports, Steinberg in Germany has encountered problems with the Amiga copy protection, which was holding the eventual release. When I spoke to Evenlode Soundworks, the official UK distributors, it confirmed that while Steinberg had indeed encountered problems, all have now been solved and the program is now undergoing extensive beta-testing. Unfortunately, Evenlode were still unsure of a final release date.

Mightier than the mouse?

I recently recieved a letter from Damien Scott in Portsmouth concerning the availability (or lack) of a light pen for the Amiga. According to Damien, he has been searching high and low for such a device, but has yet to find one.

I had similar problems locating such an item, but after a lot of advert scanning, I eventually located the magic instrument. The obliging company is Club 68000, who sells its unit for £49.95. I haven't actually got my hands on a Club 68D0's unit yet, so in fairness I can't say whether it's up to much or not. But with so many on offer, who can afford to be choosey?

Cheats corner

Are you stuck on level one of Impressions' *Raider*? To help you get to that final screen, here's all the level codes – SHOT, DYKE, HIGH, LINK, PEAR, KILN and BAND. Thanks to G. Daniels in Liverpool.

Network news

CMI technologies have announced the release of their Multiport board, which provides enhanced I/O expansion possibilities for the Amiga 2000.

The board offers two serial ports, (one standard 25 pin RS-232, and one Appletalk compatible mini 8 pin 422), an additional 25-pin parallel port and an optional SCSI controller (for the connection of hard drives, tape streamers, worm drives etc). The provision of Appletalk compatibility provides the opportunity for both lowcost networking on the network-starved Amiga, and the ability to link Amigas into Mac Appletalk networks. The CMI Multiport board is available from the Amiga Centre Scotland on 031 557 3260.

MESSAGE PORT

If you have any views on any issue raised within AmigaBLIT, or on Amiga scene in general, then why not air your views by putting pen to paper. Similarly, if you've got any news, cheats or tips which you think would be of use to your fellow Amiga users, then I'd love to hear from you. Send your letters (and bribes) to – JASON HOLBORN, AMIGABLIT, 4 QUEEN STREET, BATH BA1 1E.

Games snippets

Ocean is rather chuffed with itself at the moment, after acquiring the rights to the follow up of Realtime's Carrier Command, *Battle Command*.

Battle Command puts you in control of a futuristic tank, which battles through stages before reaching the final confrontation. Although the game has been in development for the past months, sources close to Realtime believe that the programmers are planning to re-do the programming from scratch to make the game even better.

Drive on

Driving fanatics are going to be in their element with the release of *Turbo Outrun* and *Driving Force*, from US Gold and Digital Magic respectively.

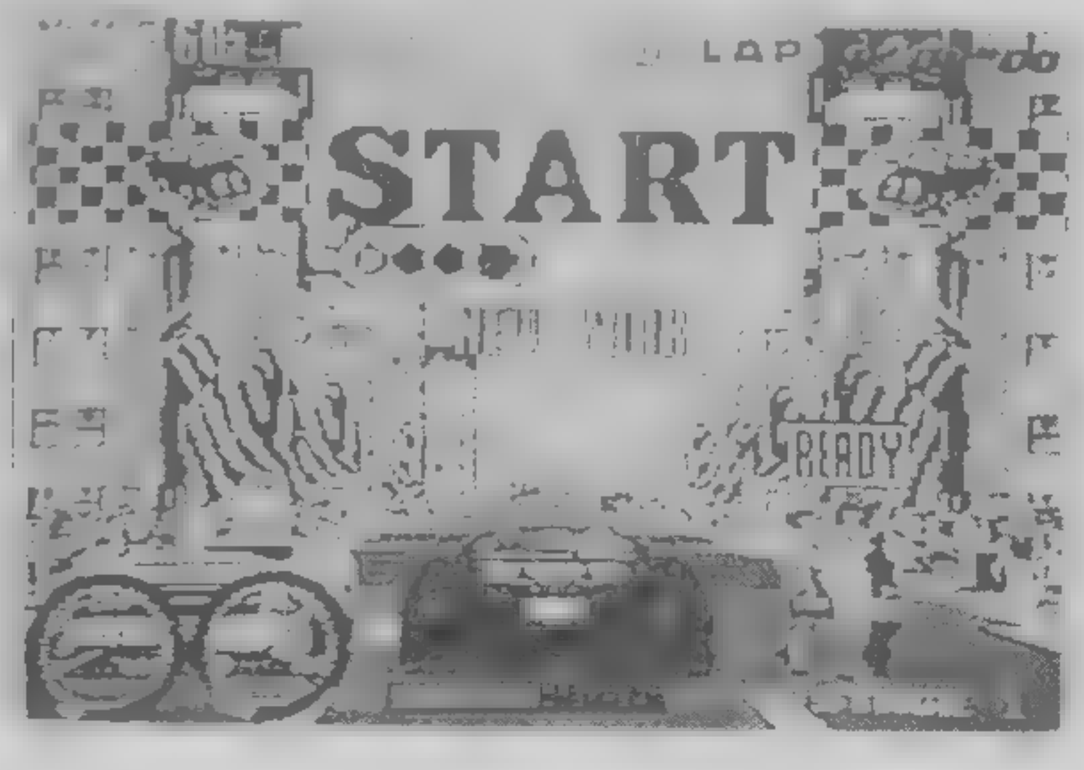
This time around, the trusty *Out Run* Testarossa has been traded in for a nice new Ferrari F40 (even though the US Gold stand at the PC Show had a Testarossa on show to promote the game), as you race across the USA, avoiding all manner of hazards.

Digital Magic's release is more of a rival to Activision's arcade conversion, *Power Drift*. *Driving Force* is a frighteningly fast-paced arcade game that really seems to push the Amiga hardware to give the kind of visuals that you would have previously only expected from a dedicated arcade console. The game allows you to drive any one of a number of different vehicles, ranging from buggies and bikes to powerful trucks.

Thanks

I'd like to thank the lads at 17 Bit Software (those purveyors of PD) for the wondrous sight that greeted my eyes when I opened a recent package. It contained a photograph of debauchery at a recent PC Show. Although I missed the even, Sunday proved to be a taxing time for young Martyn and Dave, as they journeyed around each stand, trying to consume as much drink as the stand holders would allow. Roll on the Commodore show.

Jason Holborn



YOUR FORMAT

MACHINE SPECIFIC COLUMNS

CPC

Codemasters on CD!

If you had ■ place bets on the company least likely to get into CD software, you'd have thought your entire month's salary would have been safe on the Codemasters somewhat limiping horse.

Well, not so. Those innovative Darling twins have come up not only with a CPC-CD player interface, but a compilation of some 30 of their greatest games on one compact disk. That's right, 30. Between them, the budget re-released total nearly 2Mb!

For the really rather remarkably low price of £19.95 you get lead, fast-loading software, disk and full instructions. Among the game names are such classics ■ *BMX Simulator*, *Super Stuntman*, *Dizzy Jet Bike Sim*, *Ninja Massacre*, *Four Soccer Sims* and *Twin Turbo* ■.

Codemasters has played its cards close to its chest on this one. The first hard info us journo types got about the whole thing was from the ads Codemasters have just put out. Before that, all we had were vague rumblings obtained by gently roasting industry contacts over a low flame and indulging in general fingernail pulling.

The compact disk release is revolutionary for at least two reasons.

Firstly, ■ you get 30 games for £20, that puts the price of each one ■ about 66p!

Secondly, with a loading time of as little as ■ seconds, disk drive-less CPC owners no longer have to wait untold eternities for their fave games to load ■. Also the fact that the compilation is on CD means that you can go straight to the game you want.

Thirdly, if Codemasters sells enough of its special interface leads it may establish some sort of standard for CD-based software ■-mats/loading speeds etc. What Codemasters has come up with is not true CD-ROM – there's no way a CPC could remotely control an ordinary domestic CD player, after all – but if the Darlings can make the system work reliably, they may well have themselves a nice little earner ■ their hands, what with licensing out the technology.

That's really more than two good reasons, isn't it?

The system hasn't been seen up and running on the CPC yet, but it's already working on the C64.

• Codemasters on CD: who'd have thought it?

16-bit Amstrad!

I have ■ letter here from David Owens of Northampton, who has quite ■ good question.

"One night I was looking through my back issues when I came across a title saying 'A 16-bit Amstrad'. As you can see, though, the 6128 ■ still the big boy.

"What has happened to this 16-bit machine? Has competition from Atari and Commodore become too heavy?

"■ Amstrad ever brings out a 16-bit machine will the software for it ■ as expensive as the other 16-bit machines around ■ the moment? It's been ■ months with no word. Is ■ an early April Fool?"

The 16-bit Amstrad duly came – and went. It was none other than the PC200, and all the advance publicity was slightly misleading because ■ suggested that the machine would be entirely new, a la ST or Amiga. Of course, if you count PCs, Amstrad has been making 16-bit machines for some time. None of them are any substitute for the 6128 - the PC200 actually has substantially worse graphics - even though the games cost twice as much. As far as games players are concerned, there is not now and possibly never will be an Amstrad better than the 6128.

Mythical gameplay

Activision may have turned out some really good games recently - such ■ *Dynamite Dux* and *Powerdrift* - but something went wrong with *Altered Beast*. Fresh from the coin-op, the game promises a "carnival of horrors" – and that's what ■ delivers, if for ■ the wrong reasons.

You play the part of a Roman centurion battling the evil Nelf, Lord of the Underworld. As you tramp through the five levels of this mythological epic you face ■ sorts of grisly, deformed opponents. You have to bash them into oblivion, and then collect their, er .. 'spirit balls'.

With a plot based on balls you needn't expect too much from gameplay, but I am sorry to say that *Altered Beast*'s graphics also lack bounce. Sprites are huge and menacing, but move with a kind of arthritic jerkiness that draws attention to the dubious collision detection.

Rod Lawton

SPEX

Power on

I've just managed to get hold of a completely finished version of *Powerdrift*. The only things missing from the arcade version are the copious amounts of cigarette smoke, crowds of pimply youths laughing ■ my driving abilities and the regular cash shortages which I consistently faced after playing hour upon hour of the game on end without ■ break. The graphics of *Powerdrift* have had ■ be slightly modified to fit the spectrum way of seeing things and it's a pity that the graphically intense parts tend ■ slow the action down to clapped out Reliant Robin pace all ■ ■, however. *Powerdrift* ■ an extremely credible conversion. The only thing needed to complete the air of realism ■ a pair of furry dice taped ■ your TV/monitor.

Make a little music

When it comes to making music, the spectrums usually written off ■ the Kylie Minogue of computing amongst all these new 16-bit upstarts. That's rather unfortunate because with a solid chunk of hardware attached the Speccy will surprise most people with its musical ability. It's a better actor than Kylie as well.

Put it on

One ■ the best hardware add ons for the Spectrum is the Ram Music Machine, which despite the demise of its manufacturers, is still available from public spirited Datel Electronics. The Music Machine ■ a versatile package which comes complete with a swish microphone for impromptu pop star impersonations. The microphone lets you sample sounds, mess around with pitch and different effects and then replay them to the astonishments and no doubt annoyance of family and friends.

You can also use this versatile add on as a composition tool or drum machine and, because it's fully MIDI compatible there's nothing to stop you connecting a MIDI keyboard ■ ■. In fact wily old Datel have seen the commercial worth in this and are currently offering a Music Machine and full size Yamaha keyboard for one pence under a hundred pounds. The Ram Music Machine is also available separately for £50, which seems like good value for an add on offering such a wide range of features. Contact Datel Electronics at Fenton, Stoke-On-Trent for more details.

Send it in!

Oh, and if you've produced any interesting musical pieces using or involving the Spectrum in anyway send them in to the address below for a detailed critical appraisal.

Cheats

Here's an easy to effect little cheat for Players' *Shanghi Warriors* that's been sent in by a very generous chap called Roger Loftus: get onto the high score table , enter your name as OUTLAND. Then when you start a new game, press delete to kill any menacing baddies. Same person also offered this for *Human Killing Machine*. To skip the current level, simply press X and then the GO key.

Cheers Roger, hope you enjoy the free rise in street cred you've just received by having your name printed ■ Spex.

Grapevine

A few weeks ago I put out an APB for ■ supplier of +2 power packs as one desperate reader was left without ■ working machine when his pack died. Kieren Robert's very kindly responded and suggested the following outlet as ■ supplier of said items. Omnidale Ltd (23 Curzon Street, Derby, DE1 2ES) sell power packs for the entire spectrum genus, contact this firm for more information in regards price and availability. Thanks for the help Kieren.

The machines, are they coming?

By the way, I'm still on the lookout for discounted Spectrums. So if you know ■ reputable outlet that's flogging new, never seen the back of a lorry etc, Spectrums cheaply let me know at Spex, New Computer Express, 4 Queen Street, Bath, BA1 1EJ.

Robin Alway

MATTERS FROM THE LETTER BOX

Jeff ■ Tyne and Wear has just written ■ tell me that he's sold his Amiga to fill his wallet sufficiently for a sideways move to none other than a long awaited MGT SAM Coupe. Good Man! Naturally, he's got a few questions about the machine.

1 Does ■ have hardware scroll/sprites?

2 Is there a jack ■ some description for connection ■ hi-fi?

3 Will a plus D blue ■ ■ our tape games on disk?

4 Will there be a tape version?

Here goes:

1 NOPE.

2 Yes. The Coupe's rather spiffing stereo sound output can be put through ■ ■ or Walkman.

3 You won't need the Plus D as an interface to connect a disk drive so I imagine you want to use its snapshot tape-to-disk saving capabilities. Unfortunately, I don't think you'll be able ■ ■ to try to sort something out about this one. Meanwhile, all Plus D disks should be compatible.

4 Definitely. The cassette based Coupe should sell for about £80 less than a disk version, although it's possible ■ slip one of the nic, super-slim SAM drives underneath at any point.

May I finish, Jeff, writes by adding, for those wondering why I would sell an Amiga for an eight-bit machine. Although it has brill sound/graphics ■ one finds the game play lacking in all but a few games and the operating system is horrendous to say the least.

Jeff goes on to give his reason ■ wanting a SAM, which are:

I will be able ■ load Speccy games (well playable), have games that use the SAM's hardware, will be cheaper, look just as good as Amiga games and get MIDI ports as standard, well what can I say?

Not much else. After the several planet lifespans we seem to have been waiting for MGT's baby it's great to be able ■ announce that the machine should be out, albeit in limited amounts, very soon indeed.

Bate your breath and wait for full details in Express.

CECCO CHEAT

Programming wizard Raff Cecco's Cybernoid looks great but gets a little tough in places. This short poke from Master AC Slough-off Ution gives you indefinite invulnerability and infinite extras. Should do the trick.

```
1  PRINT "Insert Cybernoid in Drive"
2  CALL &BB18
1  LOAD "cas:
2  INPUT "Lives";L
3
4  POKE &infinite ex
5  IF LOWER$(LEFT$(a
   a+1,&24,POKE
6  INPUT "any
7  IF LOWER$(
   a+1,&C3,POKE
100
1  CALL &A410
```

Q corner

Minix

I've just heard on the grapevine that someone has ported the Minix operating system to the QL. Minix [redacted] best described as a "poor mans Unix" and is more suitable than Unix for use on small single-user machines like the QL. It has been available for some time for the PC and Atari ST.

The Minix source code is [redacted] the public domain, so the QL implementation should be quite inexpensive. It comes with a C compiler (which presumably is good enough to compile itself and the Minix source code), and might be worth getting just for the C compiler.

Getting your back up

If you are still using Microdrives, it would be a good idea to adopt the backup procedure used by many DP professionals. This involves the use of three cartridges, in rotation.

Suppose you have an important Archive file, which is constantly being updated. Label the cartridges A, B and C, say. Now, decide a suitable backup frequency - every three days, maybe. You then backup your data every three days, onto each cartridge in turn. It would be advisable to keep a log, so that you don't lose track of which cartridge is to [redacted] used next. It might also be a good idea to make a fourth backup, every month, and keep it in a different place, in case the house burns down.

Apart from minimising the amount of data that has [redacted] re-entered, if one of the backups [redacted] unreadable, this technique evens out the wear on the backup cartridges. Adopting a formal technique like this should also make [redacted] more likely that the data gets backed up. Most people don't bother backing up as it is, though, so the road ahead on this one, even if it is a good idea for the long run, seems strewn with obstacles.

Quick screen clear

Rather than typing "CLS #0:CLS #1:CLS #2" every time you need [redacted] clear the entire screen (assuming you want to clear all three Mode 4 windows), the same effect can be achieved by typing "MODE 4" (or "MODE 8" if using a TV).

John Torofex

MIRACLES

[redacted]

MSXTRA

A minute of your time

Games, games, games just released on the KIXX (geddit) label, and all priced [redacted] £2.99! There are five titles on this label: *Footballer of the year, World Games, Silent Shadow, Colosseum,* and *Trantor.* Watch this space for more details on these and other titles. On the Alternative label we have two games now available, the budget game *Turbo Bike* (£2.99), and the full priced game *Gilbert. Gilbert* has had fair reviews on other formats, and I would think that the MSX version is once again a Spectrum copy. The last game [redacted] look out for is called *Captain S,* and is on the Winners label, also at £2.99. As you can see from the above selection, MSX is thriving on towards the new year.

Stop your moaning

Now, I know that many MSXers look at the number of games being released on the MSX, and then moan that they cannot find any stores that stock MSX titles. Luckily this situation is slowly changing, and Capri Marketing have asked me to point out that MSX software (and software for virtually any computer) can [redacted] bought [redacted] four of their stores. These are the COMPUTER CAVERN stores at Marlow, Reading, and Swindon, and JUST TAPE at Basingstoke. Now Capri have some bargains in store, such as *EYE* for £3.99, and *Sub Logics Flight Sim* with *Torpedo Attack* at £9.95, formely £19.00. For a list of available software phone 0628 891101. No more moaning!

Hard news

Over to hardware now, and as regular readers of this column already know, MSX 2 computers are being imported and sold by ABBEY SOFT of Spalding, Lincs. AbbeySoft now informs me that not only is it restocking with MSX 2s, but a batch of Philips MSX 1 machines are also on order, and should be in stock by the time you read this column. The machines are supplied with English handbooks, and will sell for £99.95. This means that anyone who would like [redacted] replace an ageing or defunct MSX 1 with a brand new machine can now stay with the same format. For more info phone Abbeysoft: 0775 711714.

Compatability

Melbourne House's *Road Wars* will not run on the Toshiba HX/10. This makes at least three games that Toshiba owners have missed out on, witness *Operation Wolf* from Ocean and *After Burner* by Activision. If anyone has a solution, please write.

AFW software, who produce a Z80 manual for the MTX and MSX computer, informs me that these two machines use different port numbers to access hardware devices. Consequently, this meant that one or two programes that used ROM Bios calls needed ammending. This has now been done, and all listings should run on the MSX with little trouble. The manual is called *Advanced VDP Sprite and Graphics Programming,* and is priced at £11.99.

Keith Neal

Sector 64

Trouble at t'Citadel

Martin Walker has produced some good games for the C64, and *Citadel,* (andFrom *Electronic Dreams,* at £9.99 on tape and £14.99 on disk) is no exception. Not just a shoot-em-up, the old grey matter will have to be tapped as well [redacted] you're going to get anywhere with *Citadel.* We'll ignore the plot (the usual waffle) except to say that you have to explore eight cities and recover hidden information. The cities have their own defence mechanisms, which rapidly get very nasty indeed, and there all sorts of traps for the unwary. Good graphics and absolutely brilliant sound, bordering on the unbelievable: so if you like thinking while you shoot (and you'll have to), then latch on to Citadel now.

Do software and politics mix?

Scapeghost, the last traditional adventure from those awfully nice people at Level 9, has just been released, and I have the comprehensive hint sheet in front [redacted] me. But be warned, you get more than just hints for solving the game. Comment 854 reads "*Scapeghost* is Level 9's last text adventure planned..." Planned? Write [redacted] them and make them change their minds! But worse, comment 838: "I think there should be VAT on everything, to avoid anomalies, with other taxes slightly reduced and benefits raised [redacted] compensate. VAT is a Good Thing..." Was Pete Austin of Level 9 after Mr Lawson's job? And are hint sheets the right sort of place for someone to give us his economic viewpoints? Write and tell me what you think.

Longer than average

In a recent letter to a friend I dropped in a one line C64 program, on the off chance that he hadn't seen it before. He hadn't, and there must [redacted] others like him. So know-it-alls who've had their C64s for years might groan and mumble, but the rest of you can read on. You'll have [redacted] enter this one line Basic program using the abbreviations ? for PRINT and G shifted O for GOTO.

```
[illegible]
```

I presume you're used to codes like CU for cursor up, SP for space and RVS and OFF for reverse on and off. This program won't let you fly through the walls, bullets and aliens in *Super Zaxxon,* but typing RED on the title screen very quickly (perhaps more than once) until the words RED SUPER ZAXXON appears, will.

Rumours?

Recently, rumours have been circulating about the possibility of Commodore bringing out an extended version of the [redacted] with a 3.5 disk drive built-in. This appears as likely to succeed as their 1984 attempt to successfully market a portable 64, complete with 5 and a quarter disk drive, and monitor screen the size of the average cigarette packet. The previous machine was transportable, not portable, and I wonder, would any new machine be the same?

Pete Gerrard

BEEB BOX

Yuletide games

We are now reaching the time of year when Christmas, the traditional time for giving computer games, looms ever larger on the horizon.

[redacted] what's happening in the BBC world? According to Superior's Steve Hanson that means play it (yet) again SAM I@ including a little known, but excellent game *Skirmish.* Although once set [redacted] finish after No.9, the SAM series looks to continue indefinetely. Apparently dealers like to keep a stock of the entire series, replenishing as and when necessary. Another main entry should be the sequelto *Last Ninja* (LN) called *Last Ninja 2* (LN2). This return of the Ninja is an attempt to recreate the success of LN which was the best selling BBC game last year at 20,000 copies sold. It may not, however, arrive until early December, making it a shade on the late side for the Christmas market proper.

Talking with Steve

My conversation with Steve Hanson also touched on wider matters.

First and definetely most important though is that Superior are firmly committed to the BBC market for at least the next two years. This is not just over optomistic talk, sales figures for the last year bear this out, being well up on the previous 12 months. A thriving second hand market [redacted] one factor, but perhaps more important [redacted] the existence of an efficent distributor network. A game once released can be in the shops within a few days and sales of 2-3000 registered within a week. Steve was slightly more reticent on the simmering row between Superior and impact games. Tempers now, however, seem to have cooled, so I hope the companies can coexist peacefully, if a little uneasily.

Promises (no, really)

I will promise, faithfully, honest, to review in the near future games from Play It Again Sam! including: *Barbarian, Pipeline, Baron,* which is new, and *Monsters. Ricochet,* also on the review horizon, but not part of PIAS II, is an arcade adventure written by a new programming team who are still ensconced at Charterhouse school, but working hard at their extrcurricular activities.

Andrew Brown

BOOTING UP

[redacted]

STREET TALK

BY COLIN CAMPBELL

CORKS! Thirty games for 20 quid, all on one compact disk. And to boot they all load in twenty seconds. Pretty good huh readers?

Code Masters those lovable squillionaire programming brothers have come up with a veritable revolution in loading games. No more chucking the Spec across the room each time you've waited an eternity for a game to load only to find an error at the last minute. Just bung in the CD blink and start playing. Splendid stuff.

I could almost qualify for a Whizzkid Brits in Techno Breakthrough moniker but for one unfortunate factoid.

The idea is at least 18 months old and worse it's not British at all.

Those darned Germans were first again infuriatingly. Rainbow Arts was selling a compact disk thing last year with its UK launch announced in August. The CD First Edition had some spiffing wood games on too including *Impossible Mission*.

Some demographic juggling has convinced both firms (and soon the rest of the biz will follow suit) that there's a teeming mass of computer owners who also have compact disks. It all sounds highly plausible.

Chuck out the datacorder and if you've got a Speccy Plus Two chainsaw it off. The CD game has arrived.

Have you ever thought of becoming a games reviewer? A good games playing friend of mine decided it would be a splendid idea and has carved out a good name for himself. However fearful for his career prospects and his sanity after recent episodes it's hitherto "meteoric rise".

The latest reviewer turned up at one of those dull press launches only to be faced with an ocean of vodka, wine and lager. After wading through a small lake of the stuff the tired and emotional lad promptly, er, passed out. Assembled hacks and industry "top brass" were said, to be appalled. ST owners will take some pleasure in the knowledge that he owns an Amiga.

I see Sooty has been playing computer games on his admirable TV show. But it's almost inconceivable that this superstar, this modern icon, this jewel in the crown of British popular entertainment has not featured in a computer game.

How can it be that the usually rapacious band of licence hunters has failed to spot this omission? We want Sooty and we want him fast.

MINI REVIEWS... MINI R

Ninja Warriors

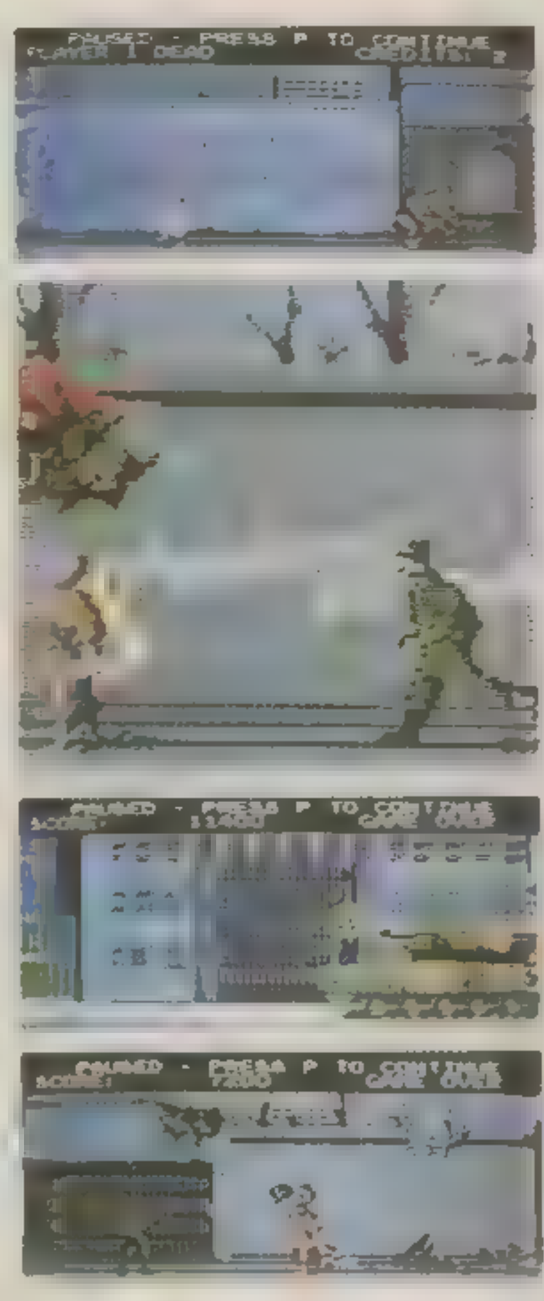
Sales Curve • £19.99 • Amiga version reviewed • Also available on ST and PC Engine

Oh, dear. How can I condone violence on this scale? *Ninja Warriors* has got to be one of the most bloodthirsty games to be released in recent months, what with flashing knives and spinning shuriken.

Still enough griping about the subject matter and one with the information. *Ninja Warriors* places you as a robotic martial-arts combatant who must fight through hoards of enemies to destroy the powerful leader of a neo-fascist organisation. Players can choose to fight alone or as part of a male/female team. Each player is armed with a pair of double swords and a limited supply of shuriken, with which they must fight their way through advancing foes including soldiers, sword-wielding warriors and even a tank.

The tank is one of the most impressive features in *Ninja Warriors*, being constructed from 17 large sprites to give smooth, effective animation. Not that the other graphics are bad. On the contrary in fact, they're very good indeed - having been taken from the original and compressed to fit onto the Amiga screen, so that the wide triple-monitor effect isn't lost. Sound too is done very well, with superb digitised effects to back up the leap and slash action.

Random Access has done a cracking job in converting the Taito coin-op and I recommend all brutality fans to check it out as soon as possible. Well there it is, another favourable arcade conversion review - what is happening on the world? I'm not sure, but I'm not complaining!



Commando

Elite • £19.99 • Also available on C64, ...rum, and ... November.

Hooray! At last! The conversion that I've been waiting for! *Commando* was the first game I bought for my C64 when I bought the machine and I loved it. Ever since the dawn of the 16-bit machine, I've been waiting to see Elite convert it to them - and it has!

The concept of *Commando* is quite simple: run up further into enemy terrain shooting everything that moves. But just because it's simple, it doesn't mean that it's a bad game. After all, the arcade game is quite old, but I still like playing the game, I have to admit.

The programmers have managed to capture the atmosphere of the original coin-op to a tee, from the well drawn graphics to the snare filled, army soundtrack. Many of the presentation points from the arcade game have been included, even the helicopter intro and the cigarette smoking inter-level screens are in there.

The gameplay is very much like the original, introducing much more in the way of a challenge than the eight-bit versions - there'll be no scoring twenty million

ARE YOU A CHEAT

If you've managed to hack your way into a game and come up with a useful hint, cheat or tip, then why not get yourself into print? You never know, you might even win yourself a bonus piece of software - that is if you send stuff in that's better than everyone else's!

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I'm still waiting for some weird and wonderful "hidden section" hacks, as they brighten up a poor reviewer's life. If you can help out then bung it in an envelope and send it to...

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Or if you're feeling lazy then stick it on the answer tape as listed in the Playback section.

Playback

"I'd just like to say that your tips for *Batman* and *Shadow of the Beast* don't work."
THE FLYING PARROT

Well they work just fine on the versions we tested them on.

"*Xenon 2* on the Amiga kicks *Gunhed* on the PC Engine. Programmers; please start using the blitter more."
ROB

"There is a bug in the Atari ST *TV Sports Football*. When you get to the Conference semi-finals, it won't save the game if you play it manually. I've contacted Mirrorsoft and they're sorting it out."
CHRIS BOLT, Poole, Dorset

Thanks for that piece of information Chris. Hope you get results soon.

"Can you print the results of the £100 of software competition? Also, there's a new virus, called the Anthrax virus."
BILL, London

There aren't actually any results yet, since no-one has won!

Your views on the latest software – call 0225 444439

SPORTING TIM...

CDS • £19.99 • ST version reviewed • Also ...ble on A...

Official TV pullovers ahoy! Now you can place yourself in the position of such mega sporting personalities as Andy Gray, Emlyn Hughes and the all time great Jimmy Greaves (of Saint and Greavesie fame) in the comfort of your own home. CDS's version of the hit quiz includes most of the items found in the TV original - except for the sports personalities that is!

The game consists of eight rounds. The first few are standard rounds which take place on a triangular game board. Each player presses a button to roll a die and a marker moves around the board, with questions being asked corresponding to the colours of the squares. Next comes the Hit for Six round, in which you have six chances to work out the clues to a mystery personality. After a couple more standard rounds, there's the jigsaw picture round. This consists of a picture being slowly revealed, with the player guessing what it relates to. Finally is the big finale - the quick fire round, which requires all players to hit their buzzers (ooer) and answer the questions as quickly as possible. This round is where my main gripe comes in. The computer players never get the Quick-Fire questions wrong, so if they buzz you might as well forget it.

The sections are well organised and easy to follow, but you won't get far if you don't know much about sport (what a sur-

REVIEWS...

C64, Spectrum, and CPC. Amiga version due end of

after three hours on this matey! Any fans of the original shouldn't miss this at any cost, and some other players not familiar with the coin-op could do worse than have a look at this for a bit of the old gratuitous ultra-violence.

• Also available on Amiga

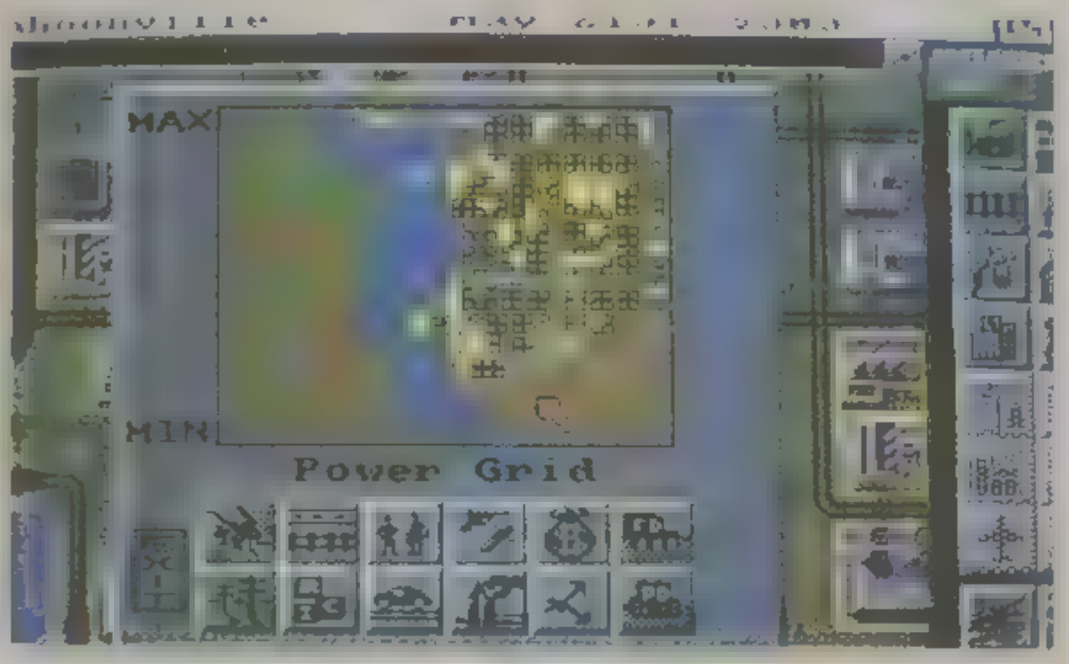
prise). Having griped on like that, *Sporting Triangles* makes quite a good multi-player game and could give you a laugh or three in front of the monitor.

SIM CITY

GAME of the WEEK

Infogrames • £29.99 • Amiga version reviewed

Remember the feeling of power that Electronic Arts' *Populous* gave you? Well Infogrames has come up with a game which allows to wield a similar sort of power with the inclusion of high-tech city developments in its latest simulation *Sim City*.



Imagine yourself in the position of the mayor of San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake. Pretty intimidating prospect, eh? Well that's just one of the scenarios included with this city development simulation from Infogrames. Sounds boring? Well remember how boring the idea of *Populous* sounded before you were hooked on the game and give this game a chance - it's worth it!

You can either choose to play one of a selection of pre-created cities (like San Francisco) or start a new one from scratch.

If you choose an existing city, then you must pull it back up from the ruins of the aftermath of a disaster, such as an earthquake a flood or an invading Godzilla-like monster.

Creating a city from scratch requires you to build up commerce, industry and residential areas for your population - but remember to give the people a way to come to the city - such as an airport or seaport - or your game will be over pretty quickly.

Once a basic city structure has been created (including transit systems and power) you must maintain the running of the city by collecting taxes and using them to expand the zones, carry out repairs or look after law and order by building police departments.

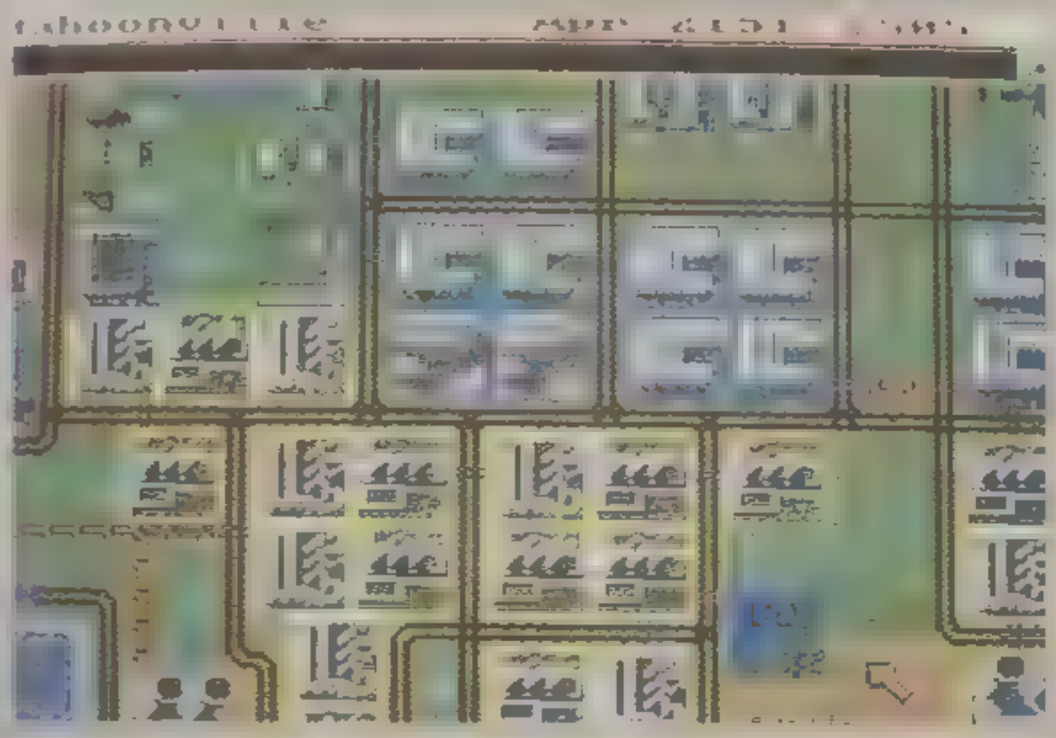
The running of the city gets more complex the more things you build, but if you do get bored you can always bring about a disaster to test your mayoral skills to the full (strictly for masochists!).

GRAPHICS AND SOUND • Sound is kept to a minimum, just basic spot effects for things like the helicopter and bulldozer, but what there is works well and doesn't detract from the game itself. The graphics are the main element of the game and are very well designed indeed. Everything is clear and easy to understand and some of the cute little "touches" are nice - such as the crowd in the stadium and the boat tootling around the waterways. The phrase that springs to mind is "small but perfectly formed", pretty much in the same way as the graphics in *Populous* - and we all know how impressive they were.

OTHER VERSIONS • *Sim City* came in at the last minute, so I haven't had chance to look at the C64 and PC versions yet, but when they are set for release, then I'll let you know. Until then you'll just have to keep your bits crossed.

VERDICT • *Sim City* is one of those games that you can easily get involved in from the off and like *Populous* (again) you don't realise how long you've been playing it until you come off the machine after about three hours! It will take a considerable amount of time before the game gets boring, since you can always set yourself a harder goal to reach, or failing that you can bring about a disaster to spice the gameplay up a bit. This option is strictly for masochists, though!

Anyone who enjoys the feeling of power and likes creating things, then *Sim City* is for you. If you don't, then try it anyway, it might change your mind.



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BUILDING ON dBASE

There's a growing number of third party add-ons to dBase III Plus and dBase IV, badged by Ashton Tate. Neil Booth takes a look...

Ashton Tate's *dBase III Plus* and *dBase IV* have established themselves as probably the standard PC database package. But there are gaps in the program – poor facilities for file recovery beyond simple index rebuilding, no cross-tab statistics functions like those offered by *Paradox 3* from Borland or MicroRim's *RBase*, and so on. These third party add-ons, packaged and badged by Ashton Tate, aim to plug those gaps.

Unfortunately *dBase File Recovery* proved less than life-saving in a real life data recovery situation. It offers some good facilities – the file header recovery feature is very useful as this is a common problem with *dBase*. But the program is just so hard to understand that it isn't always clear just what it's doing, despite the *dBase IV* 'house style' menus. The program could cope with data being offset in the record buffer – a common problem with *dBase* – but only if it was at the start of the file, and not otherwise. No comfort if your corrupted file is otherwise.

The verdict on the file recovery utility must, I'm afraid, be a pessimistic one. I found it just not easy or obvious enough in use, nor powerful enough, to make it worth the money.

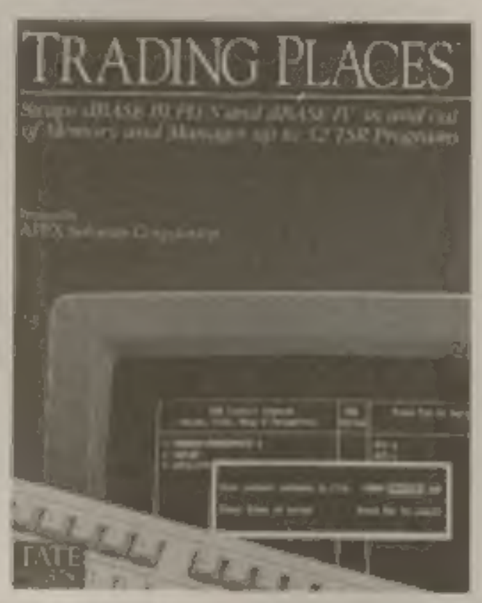
dBase Stats offers the chance to convert your *dBase* data into files that can be used directly in a variety of programs: *Chart-Master*, *Draw Applause*, and the obligatory Lotus *1-2-3*, *Symphony* and *Multiplan*.

However, it also works as a stand alone product, and is a powerful statistics analyser. If terms like cross tabulation hypothesis, measures of association, analysis of variance and regression analysis mean anything to you, you'll be pleased to know that dBase Stats will cope with them all.

The £295 price tag is not exactly cheap, and this is one of those products that is very useful for the sort of people it would be useful for.

The third add-on has a more straightforward purpose. *Trading Places* transparently swops *dBase III* or *IV* in and out of memory. The idea is that, once set up, a 'hot key' when pressed will save the current state of *dBase* to disk, allowing you quickly to run another application – your word processor or spreadsheet or whatever. Another press of the hot key and the saved *dBase* data is recovered, putting you back exactly where you left off.

As such it is just a time saver, stopping you from having to save all your files and quit *dBase* in the normal way – a matter of seconds instead of a minute or two. Hence it's great for anyone who regularly uses other applications with *dBase* and needs to use them concurrently. However, if you're looking for a software swopper, my money would tend to go for *Software Carousel*. But *Trading Places* is fair enough.●



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COMPUTER CHAOS

More tales of moronic microcomputers from Mel Croucher

Stanford University, USA

The $115 million Linear Collider project is finally scrapped after more that 100 programmers waste a year trying to rescue the massive investment. This is not only wasteful but farcical, because there is absolutely nothing wrong with it. The final and saddening press release admits to a system "so complicated that glitches, breakdowns in myriad magnets, computer controls and focusing devices don't work together long enough to get results.'
(So screw it!)
(*San Francisco Chronicle*)

Ministry of Defence, Mole Dept., Worcester

Ex-servicemen are being ripped off something rotten. A leaked document accuses colleagues at the MoD Records Department in Bath of keying in the pension entitlements of Royal Navy and Royal Marines pensioners falsely, due to 'haste, inexperience and fundamental errors in the programming'. It is estimated that 14% of ex-servicemen have not received their entitlements, and even though the MoD are aware of the problem, they fail to notify 110,000 pensioners of the compensation due. New files are opened, but old files are not rectified in 'rationalisation exercises.' Policy dictates that arrears will not be notified, but only dealt with when individual claimants apply in writing. An independent report confirms that this situation 'constitutes a computer fraud running into several millions of pounds.'
(*Daily Telegraph*)

Newport Beach, California

Ford Aerospace develops a computerised self-propelling gun, mounted on a tank chassis, and designed to shoot down invading MIG-23s. It is codenamed Sgt. York, after a celluloid hero played by Gary Cooper. Unfortunately, the Army rejects the new weapon as a 'whole heap of doodoo'. Vice-President Helig of Ford Aerospace explains why: 'During tests, the York radar system ignored moving air targets and instead identified nearby buildings.' This is shorthand for 'the bloody computer blew up our command post.'
(*Los Angeles Times*)

Delaware, USA

It's computerised election time for incumbent Lieutenant Governor S.B. Woo and challenger Sam Beard. One district is due to log in 28 votes, but a tired and emotional keyboard operator logs in a total of 2828 by mistake. Woo woo's, winning with eighty votes. Beard boils, berating Bolshies for electronic vote rigging, because two thousand fake votes have lost him the election. An electronic recount is demanded. Sure enough, the computer is found guilty of vote-rigging.

In favour of Sam Beard! Woo whoops.
(*New York Times*)

Berlin, Germany

The celebrated robot Santa Claus who blew a fuse last year after excited Berliner tots urinated upon his chips is back with a vengeance! The holographic face, servo-assisted limbs and speech-synth unit have been replaced by state-of-the-art components.

Namely Herr Otto Bauchwitz, a professional dwarf. Seasons greetings!
(*Bild Zeitung*)

National Health Service, United Kingdom

The Dental Estimates Board pays out £316,981 for a total of 8,442 bogus treatments by Australian dentist practising in London. The DEB ICL-19-4S computer only checks on the names of the dentists, and does not query the fact that all of them seem to be treating the same patients. This goes on for four years, until a DHSS employee notices that all of them seem to have an identical workload. When a check is run on the practitioners, all but one is found to have returned to Australia long, long ago.

The remaining dentist is tracked down, charged on 23 counts of fraud and jailed for 18 months.

The computer is reprogrammed to check out patient's names.
(*Computer Talk*)

IRS, US Tax Commission, California

Commissioner Roscoe Egger admits to a Congressional Hearing that over 50,000 appeals from worried taxpayers have been shredded. This is due to the fact that disgruntled Inland Revenue employees have taken to flushing files down the electronic toilet whenever wrong Social Security numbers or name variants crop up.

Apart from the destroyed documents, a mere 1,150,000 personal tax files are also affected, and outstanding arrears in Government interest alone totals over $200 million!
(*Library of Congress report*)

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